“Ownership gets you up in the morning, but can keep you awake at night’

An exploration of the development of work-related psychological ownership in early career professionals

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Abstract

Studies of Psychological Ownership (PO) have captured the imagination of scholars in organisational research and beyond due to the many suggested positive outcomes which occur from feelings of “mine”. Nevertheless, the initial conceptualisation of PO has been under investigated, leaving early questions still unanswered and warranting further research. Consequently, this research aims to contribute to our understanding by exploring how PO develops in early career professionals who are entering the workplace.

A qualitative methodological approach consisting of twenty-six interviews with Work Placement Students (WPS), Supervisors and Placement Development Advisors (PDA) captures a rich, detailed tapestry of PO development. To date, quantitative studies dominate PO research, and this study aims to provide some much-needed methodological diversity.

Findings indicate four key conclusions. Firstly, that job-related PO can develop earlier than originally suggested, often via a building block approach with participants showing examples of task ownership within the first three months of their work placement and most demonstrating job role and project PO promptly thereafter.

Secondly, conclusions were reached that for job-related PO to be quickly and successfully developed, there is a requirement for ownership permissioning via an active relational “giving and taking ownership” process. Job-related ownership was expediated through the organisational culture clearly signalling ownership expectations and the supervisor actively “giving” ownership and demonstrating trust in the individual. “Taking” ownership was demonstrated by participants in two forms; either once permissioned, the individual job crafted to continually develop job-related ownership; or if ownership was not given or permissioned, it was sometimes still taken by the incumbent.

Thirdly, new outcomes from job-related PO were observed in this group of participants, including pride in their work and an increase in confidence. Nonetheless, if ownership was felt strongly, it often weighed heavily on the shoulders of participants, and this burden of ownership should not be underestimated. Given individuals are only just understanding “how work,

works", employers need to be aware of the negative implications when individuals feel they fall short of perceived personal, supervisory and organisational expectations. Consequently, there needs to be management of the potential high stress levels this weight can cause.

Finally, a possible new PO target was identified in this research as career-related PO. For these young workers who have been conditioned to believe there is no job for life, the attachment to developing their career seemed exceedingly strong in some participants. This has potential to cause tension between other PO targets, such as the job role and the organisation. Career PO may become their one, consistent attachment in working life.

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List of Abbreviations

ECP	Early Career Professional
PAO	Possessions and Ownership
PO	Psychological Ownership
TA	Thematic Analysis
WPS	Work Placement Student

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Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Why are some individuals more attached to their job role or organisation than their colleagues and what are the outcomes of this attachment for these individuals and their employers? These are questions that have been posed by scholars this century who are interested in the development of a phenomenon named psychological ownership (PO) which is suggested to have significant workplace benefits, including job satisfaction, affective commitment, in-role performance, organisational commitment and organisational citizenship behaviour ((Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Mayhew et al. 2007; Avey et al. 2009; Wang et al. 2018; Zhang 2020).

Early PO research (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003) captured the imagination of organisational behaviour scholars, as this affective and cognitive attachment can bind individuals to workplace targets such as their job role, their team or the organisation itself. This attachment or desire to have and to control things within our possession and make them part of our extended self (Pierce et al. 2001) is similar to how we feel and invest in tangible items such as our homes and personal effects (Belk 1988; Dittmar 1992). It should therefore be no surprise that theories regarding possession and ownership are seen as the conceptual core of PO and the concept of “mine” (Pierce et al. 2001).

Nevertheless, there are clear differences between PO and ownership of possessions due to the lack of legal or social sanctions that may come with most traditional forms of ownership including employee ownership schemes or worker co-operatives (Pierce and Furo 1990; Denegri-Knott et al. 2016). Instead, PO suggests a psychological state or mental attachment in which an employee develops possessive feelings towards certain targets, many of which are intangible (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004). That attachment facilitates certain feelings which can have both positive or negative personal and organisational implications, although most research has emphasised the positive aspects such as those mentioned previously.

Whilst PO now goes far beyond its original organisational behaviour roots, including areas as diverse as augmented reality (Yuan et al. 2021), there are

still many unanswered questions about PO in the workplace. Organisational researchers have considered PO's conceptualisation and roots (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004), it's development, measurement, outcomes and antecedents, yet there are early areas related to its conceptualisation flagged by Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) which still require investigation.

In particular whilst PO research has concentrated on work-based targets such as the job role or organisation, comparatively little conceptualisation has been undertaken into other areas such as collective PO, work-based tools or other work-related aspects such as organisational culture. Early PO research (Pierce et al. 2004, p.454) suggested a need for a more "fine grained view of PO" and whilst the research community have relied heavily on the initial conceptualisation (and an alternate perspective from Avey et al. (2009) underpinned with regulatory focus theory (Higgins 1997)), there is more interest in antecedents than detailed conceptualisation. Dawkins et al. (2017) PO review gave a rallying cry for further refinement yet five years on little has changed. Most research continues within the original framework, using the original surveys focussing on similar generalised full time knowledge worker populations. Whilst PO research has transcended countries and cultures, research into work populations remain rigid, leaving organisations unable to transfer PO understanding of experienced knowledge workers to other employment groups. Consequently it is challenging to ascertain exactly how PO is developed at the start of a career or how it waxes and wanes during an individual's organisational lifetime. Additionally, given the working world also relies on contract workers, those in the gig economy and other forms of short-term employment, further refining of PO to encapsulate other workers would broaden and deepen scholar's knowledge.

This study will focus on **early career professionals** which is one of the aforementioned under-researched population groups thus starting a conversation about atypical working populations. The term early career professional does not always specify a particular timespan, although the American Psychology Association suggest it refers to individuals having only worked in industry for eight - ten years of their career. In the context of this

study it applies to individuals taking their first career step into the workplace. By exploring the development of work-related PO in individuals at the start of their career, using a sample of students on a work placement, there is also opportunity to simultaneously build PO understanding in early career professionals and individuals in a contract rather than a permanent job role.

Furthermore, this study uses a **qualitative method** to accomplish this study. Organisational based PO studies have traditionally used the survey (with Likert scales) method to ascertain feelings of ownership which has been beneficial at early inception, nevertheless Dawkins et al. (2017) has questioned the conceptualisation of the most popular survey introduced by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004). Given PO can be situated within our working lives which generally involve significant social interaction, qualitative studies would provide an opportunity to hear the lived experiences of PO development and some of the potential influences.

1.2 Background to the researcher and the research

The researcher's background has taken her from a business workplace to working in a university. Her experience managing the recruitment for an investment bank resulted in her involvement in early career talent programmes. This led to a role as a Placement Co-ordinator at a South Coast university working with students looking for work placements. Whilst she has moved into an academic role, her interest in early career professionals remains hence the context of this study. Having seen the transformational effect that a successful work placement can have on an early career professional in terms of career aspirations, self-belief and self-identity, resulted in the researcher's belief that for some individuals (who undertake work placements), this is the start of their career. Other researchers may suggest that for university student's their career starts in their first graduate role, but the insider knowledge of working with work placement students led this researcher to focus on this particular time period.

Why psychological ownership? Since a colleague first mentioned the term, it captured the imagination of the researcher, probably due to her own attachment to work place targets. As someone who has always felt attached to their job roles, she wanted to find out more. This, along with her insider

knowledge of work placements led her to be interested in exploring how PO manifests at the start of a career.

Therefore this research focusses on students from a British post-1992 university who are undertaking a compulsory work placement as part of their university degree. It is important to provide some background information to situate these individuals in their context.

PO research to date has mainly focussed on the establishment phase or middle career phases of individuals which, although useful when assessing the initial construct, misses the crucial stage when individual professional identities are still developing and are malleable. These participants are at the start of their career with relatively little previous work experience (other than part time work); are working in a job role with a fixed end date thus making their experiences transitory and are considered “net natives” as they are one of the first cohorts to enter the workplace having had access to the internet throughout their childhood and teenage years.

These WPS are situated in the organisational entry or initiation phase which is considered to last for the first two years of employment (Dalton et al. 1977; Cron 1984, p.86; Cron and Slocum 1986; Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1986; Greenhaus et al. 2010), managing the demands of transitioning from education into working life and moving from a “student” to “worker” identity, transferring knowledge to a different context (Ripamonti et al. 2018). As this is a period of professional identity building and work sensemaking, it is an important phase in developing workplace skills and offers researchers a myriad of opportunities to consider the factors that influence the development of PO in the workplace.

1.2.1 Work Placements

Both the Dearing Report (Dearing 1997) and the Wilson Review (2012) emphasised the benefits of work-related-learning for university students, one form of which is a work placement. Work placements are a voluntary or compulsory part of an undergraduate degree (sometimes defined as a sandwich course); frequently positioned in year three of a four-year degree; lasting up to 56 weeks (thirteen months); with university staff (usually found within a placement team) acting as an additional supporter outside of the

organisation's own structure (Inceoglu et al. 2019). Whilst the participants in this study are only required to complete a 30 week placement, the nature of placement pipelines which require the current placement student to "hand over" to the next placement student means in reality most participants in this study worked on average for one year.

Terminology can differ across universities and organisations, with "internships" also a commonly used term (Aggett and Busby 2011), however, as historically this has referred to a shorter period of work experience, this study will use the term work placements. A Highfliers report (2020) suggested a record number of 13,514 work experience, internships, and work placements from the United Kingdom's top employers with many small and medium sized organisations also investing in student placements. The benefits to employers when hiring work placement students can include having an additional employee for a reasonably cheap outlay as well as providing an early career talent pipeline for the organisation. For students, in addition to income, work placements provide them the opportunity to see "how work works", clarify potential career options, build self-efficacy and develop a professional self-identity (Edwards 2014b; Inceoglu et al. 2019; Mele et al. 2021). The benefits post placement generally suggest WPS have a stronger academic performance in their final year of studies and improved graduate employment, including on average a higher salary (Mason et al. 2009; Crawford and Wang 2015; Brooks and Youngson 2016; Jackson 2017; Jones et al. 2017; Jackson and Collings 2018). These benefits are suggested to be partly due to an increase in confidence as well as being better able to link theory with practice. Work placement students are also able to return the "work structure" to education, which helps with the challenging aspect of final year studies and finding a graduate job role (Brooks and Youngson 2016). Nonetheless, some researchers suggest that whilst there are many positives, the post placement impact is less than often suggested (Wilton 2012; Inceoglu et al. 2019). Additionally, Jackson (2015) study of undergraduates on work placements in Australia did ascertain that some work placement students did feel anxiety and stress due to their lack of certainty on "how work works", whilst others lacked confidence due to their lack of mastery in areas such as IT skills, dealing with co-workers, mentors, and managers. The study does not indicate if these were long standing feelings or

if part of the initial transition into the workplace. Certainly, feelings of “how work works” and mastery of the job role suggest challenges of crossing boundaries. Odio et al. (2021) posits that this can be an important explorative, transformational period therefore such challenges are to be expected.

An individual’s first job is often considered to be a “rite of passage” (Gennep 1960) in which individuals experience an identity change resulting in a move to adulthood. Liminality which has its roots in anthropology is characterised by a time bound period within this rite of passage whereby individuals feel “betwixt and between” identities (Turner 2011).

Different rituals can be widely observed in the workplace, with organisations that hire WPS and graduates often aiding that change of identity via induction and onboarding rituals. Other forms of rituals include rites of enhancement usually in the form of recognition of employees, be it award ceremonies, successes amplified in articles and company reports; rites of renewal strengthening department and organisational social structures; and rites of integration such as graduate programmes or Christmas parties (Trice and Beyer 1984; Islam and Zyphur 2009).

Whilst there is small body of research relating to liminality and work placements (Hart and Montague 2015; Mele et al. 2021), Hart and Montague (2015) suggest that a work placement is likely to trigger such a liminal process whereby an individual moves from a student identity to one of a professional. The pre liminal phase involves separation rites to help a new employee shed their student identity. These may be formal events during an onboarding process or informal interactions with their new peer group and line manager. The threshold, liminal or transitional period is one characterised by uncertainty, disorientation and ambiguity as the incumbent tries to fit into working life, undertaking intense sensemaking to help contemplate their new possible selves (Ibarra 1999). Mele et al. (2021) research with psychology students on an internship suggested the experience could be conceived as both a continuation and a separation from their student life. Whist this is a different experience as much academic learning still takes place to become psychologist, there is still considerable meaning-making and anxiety related to their new status. For business and marketing students, their new social

context allows them to disown their student self and experiment with new identities, in an inside-out-dialogic orientation or through being forced to recognise the changes that have taken place via an outside-in-dialogic orientation (Beech 2011).

Holmes (2015) suggests that when considering an individual's career-related identity, both self and social identity are emphasised. Individuals presenting an emergent identity may find this is upheld or denied by others, or their colleagues may ascribe an identity to an individual which the individual then affirms or rejects. This interplay between both the self and social identities help individuals develop and validate new workplace personas.

These socially invisible changes require reflection from the individual and are often aided by social rituals that help new employees reconstruct their identity. Workplace events such as inductions or workshops along with a guide in the form of a line manager or "placement manager" signpost, role model and encourage the move to a socially accepted professional identity. Nevertheless, whilst outwardly they may look like a professional, there may still be internal angst as individuals struggle to feel comfortable in their new skin. The completion of a probationary period or the successful execution of key tasks may be ceremonies of incorporation resulting in the individual moving to a post liminal identity of "worker" or "employee" and a greater feeling of belonging (Gennep 2013).

Entry into this new life phase is likely to involve both formal and informal social rituals facilitating the move into a "worker" identity. The liminal process may be both expediated and hampered within the social context via the organisational culture, the line manager and by peers. Some individuals may find themselves in limbo, neither seen as part of the team, nor no longer feel like a student, resulting in a loss of confidence or sense of belonging. Most individuals will make this successful transition, although time scales may differ depending on the individual and their circumstances.

The social construction of an early graduate career has been partly created via the narratives surrounding early career professionals, where change is a ubiquitous part of working life (Peeters et al. 2019), and universities need to

prepare students for ongoing uncertainties and challenges in the workplace (Römgens et al. 2020). All of this continues the rhetoric that there is no job for life and that individuals will need to continually develop their skills to stay employable in a world where new jobs will be created using technology that doesn't currently exist (Kumar 2007).

In many ways, these assertions are not new with Milkovich and Hall (1977) conceiving that individuals should drive their own careers and DeFillippi and Arthur (1994) suggesting that through the boundaryless career individuals can cross employment boundaries. Nevertheless, rapid organisational changes, frequent technological innovation and more precarious work suggest a requirement for life-long learning to successfully manage recurrent transitions across different forms of work (Direnzo and Greenhaus 2011; Savickas 2011; Forrier et al. 2015; De Vos et al. 2021).

Donald et al. (2019) suggest by taking career ownership an individual in essence forges a protean career (Hall and Moss 1998) whereas those individuals who do not own their career are more likely to establish a more traditional work life. However, this form of career ownership suggests individual's control their career destinies rather than applying it to the theoretical concept of PO. Nevertheless, PO and career ownership have been briefly considered together suggesting PO could mediate individual's subjective career success and their work-related outcomes.

However, Donald et al. (2019) study does emphasise that undergraduates when questioned suggest their self perceptions of employability are influenced by human capital, career ownership and career advice. Thus, suggesting that whilst today's notion of graduate career has a clear social construction, graduate employment is also far more complex than often perceived (Tomlinson 2013).

Therefore whilst this study is related to the construction of PO, there is a myriad of social influences and expectations which encapsulate individuals at the start of their career. This period of great change when mindsets are malleable, but uncertainty can be high, situates participants in a different context to most previous PO research participants.

Despite the government's consistent interest in undergraduate's work related learning over the last twenty-five years, there is less research covering work placements than might be expected, with most studies focussing on strengths and weaknesses of work placements, transitions into the workplace and then back to university, employability skills and the development of professional identities (Ibarra 1999; Ibarra and Barbulescu 2010; Ibarra and Petriglieri 2010; Moores and Reddy 2012; Brooks and Youngson 2016; Jackson 2017; Tsai et al. 2017). This final area falls within the scope of this study, both relating to how early career professionals might develop feelings of ownership in the workplace and how this links to their identity.

1.3 The relevance of the research

The relevance of this research to the academic and practitioner community is the exploration of two under researched areas in PO, that of early career professionals who are working in a fixed term contract role. By using qualitative research there are opportunities to provide some rich contextual information highlighting the lived experiences of individuals who are discovering how "work, works". By interviewing line managers and university staff who visit these early career professionals whilst in the workplace, there is an opportunity to see different perspectives of PO through social interactions and work life stories. This research does not aim to generalise, rather to explore the complexities and transitory nature of work in order to contribute to the widening of the PO conversation.

1.4 Aims, objectives and research questions relating to the research

The dearth of literature relating to PO in early career professionals/contract roles and the lack of methodological diversity has provided the direction of this study. Therefore the purpose of this research is to explore the development of work-related PO in individuals at the start of their career, using a sample of work placement students from a post 1992 university.

1.4.1 Objectives

1. To explore the formation of work-related psychological ownership in individuals at the start of their career.
2. To uncover the positive and negative outcomes suggested from the participant's experience of job-related psychological ownership
3. To identify areas where qualitative research can add value to Psychological Ownership studies
4. To provide a framework for how PO may be utilised and developed by organisations and their key stakeholders (e.g., line managers, HR).

1.4.2 Research Questions

1. How might psychological ownership of work-related targets be constructed by individuals at the start of their career?
2. What factors seem to influence the development of work-related psychological ownership targets in this specific group of individuals?
3. What do these individuals, line managers and Placement Development Advisors perceive to be the potential outcomes (both positive and negative) of developing job-related psychological ownership at the start of a career?
4. How might qualitative studies benefit our understanding of psychological ownership?

1.4.3 Thesis Structure

This study is presented over five chapters. Chapter one has provided an introduction to the thesis with context relating to this particular group of participants.

Chapter two summarises the PO literature including PO's suggested conceptual core relating to theories of possession and ownership (PAO).

Chapter three outlines the methodological divergence of this study which used qualitative research to explore the development of PO in this target population.

Chapter four provides an overview of the findings from this study highlighting four key themes relating to the development of PO in this group of participants.

Chapter five outlines the conclusion of this study outlining the theoretical contribution of this study, recommendations and areas for future research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Psychological Ownership

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

This chapter will consider the literature relating to Psychological Ownership, starting with a brief overview of some of the considered job-related PO targets before providing a definition and demonstrating the conceptual differences with other organisational related theories. Then it will move to an overview of the conceptual core of PO, theories relating to Possessions and Ownership (PAO). Further sections will provide more detail of why individuals might develop feelings of ownership within an organisational setting, the posited routes to PO development and what outcomes it may bring to an organisation and individual, be they positive or negative. The later sections of this literature review assess how PO is measured and sampled before providing a conclusion. The discussion will weave in theories relating to early career professionals on a work placement, serving as a reminder of the focus of this study, that is of inexperienced workers in shorter-term assignments. It is acknowledged that the majority of PO theories to date are based on research undertaken with experienced knowledge workers who are mostly in permanent roles. Rather than a hindrance, this allows us to explore alternative experiences thus helping us understand stable elements of the constructs and those which may be relevant to other groups. Given the complex nature of the topic these early pages provide crucial background information and therefore will not immediately relate to this context.

2.2 Theoretical Origins of Psychological Ownership

The notion of PO was first introduced to Management scholars suggesting a form of organisational ownership that went beyond legal requirements (Pierce et al. 1991). This emotional and behavioural ownership sparked interest from organisational scholars when Pierce et al (2001) seminal work on psychological ownership suggested individuals might have feelings of ownership for targets such as our job roles or the organisation itself. Four articles written by Pierce and colleagues (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) laid the theoretical foundations for PO and whilst there has been some contrasting theorising (Avey et al. 2009; Avey et

al. 2012) most theorists have used the original conceptualisation as the basis for further research.

Pierce et al. (2001) posit that PO predominantly comes from the conceptual core of possessiveness and the psychology of “mine” with PO development highly influenced by work related to the psychology of possession including work by Furby (1978a) and Dittmar (1992) further explored in later sections. Pierce et al. (2001) were also influenced by anthropologists and philosophers, but given the stated feelings of possessiveness, “what is mine” there is an emphasis on the scholars in theories of possession and ownership.

In their early work, Pierce and colleagues (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) suggest that as well as individuals having possessive feelings for their possessions, individuals can have similar feelings to non-physical items, stating previous research relating to; owning our labour (Locke 1690); children’s ownership of nursery rhymes and owning our ideas (Isaacs 1933; Heider 1958).

They posit PO as a multifaceted phenomenon with a cognitive and affective element in which individuals feel possessive for certain workplace targets (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004). This early theorisation suggests that ownership is a human characteristic, part innate, part learned behaviour, part cognitive and part affective which gratifies several key motives resulting in feelings of attachments to targets such as our job role. These motives are: efficacy and effectance, self-identity and a sense of place/home and whilst independent of each other, their strength may be influenced by an individual’s personality or values.

Pierce and Colleagues (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) allude to the complexity of PO emergence suggesting a smorgasbord of motives, routes, individual and target factors required to facilitate PO development. They propose three key routes for PO development: control, investing self in target and intimate knowledge of the target. Again, these routes are distinct, however the greater the number of routes, the stronger the feelings of ownership. They suggest control and

investing self are the most effective routes to PO partly due to their interaction with each other. To facilitate emergence, targets also need to be attractive to individuals, open and accessible with the opportunity for them to be manipulated. Thus, organisations will need to play their part in PO development with work environment structures facilitating or reducing barriers to PO. Whilst individuals may feel an immediate or strong initial feeling of ownership of targets because investing self in target and intimate knowledge of target take time to develop, Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) indicate that it will take time for these feelings to strengthen. It is posited that feelings may not last forever and decoupling or divestment rituals may help to facilitate this process, although to the author's knowledge, no research relating to PO and disinvestment has been undertaken.

The following sections provide a more detailed overview of psychological ownership and its conceptual core, theories relating to possession and ownership.

2.3 Defining Psychological Ownership

PO is a multidimensional construct in which individuals and groups have an emotional and cognitive attachment to a particular target which results in feeling psychologically tied to it. This may be demonstrated by statements of attachment such as "I feel this job is part of me" and "I feel a sense of personal ownership" (Pierce et al, 2001, 2003). Such attachment has aroused a growing interest from theorists as it is often associated with a range of organisational and individual benefits, for example job satisfaction: (Mayhew et al. 2007; Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Knapp et al. 2014); creativity, organisational commitment; (Van Dyne et al 2004); organisational citizenship behaviour; (Van Dyne et al 2004 and Liu et al 2012) organisational based self-esteem (Song et al. 2014). There are some studies pertaining to the dark side of psychological ownership although this has been less widely explored (Brown et al. 2005b; Brown 2009; Brown and Zhu 2016; Smith et al. 2018; Cocieru et al. 2019b; Zhang 2020).

However the interest in psychological ownership goes far beyond theorists in organisational studies with research undertaken in marketing and consumer behaviour (Zhang et al. 2014; Hillenbrand and Money 2015; Hulland et al. 2015; Jussila et al. 2015; Karahanna et al. 2015; Peck and Shu 2018; Reto and Jacob 2019; Pick 2021), family businesses (Rantanen and Jussila 2011; Mahto et al. 2014), co-operatives (Saila et al. 2012), technology (Henri et al. 2008; Brasel and Gips 2014), sport (Cocieru et al. 2019a), education and healthcare (Wood 2003; Md-Sidin et al. 2009; Asatryan et al. 2013; Mifsud et al. 2019), environmental psychology (Matilainen et al. 2017) and philosophical studies (Bermúdez 2015). Whilst this literature review will concentrate on the organisational aspect of PO research, other areas will be included to provide the reader with a greater breadth of knowledge.

Whilst Pierce et al (1991) first introduced the notion of PO in the early 1990's, the first frequently referred to definition was first provided in 2001:

> *"that state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (material or immaterial in nature) or a piece of it is theirs (i.e. it is MINE!)"* *(Pierce et al. 2001, p.299)*

This definition suggests a feeling of being psychologically tied to a target and the notion that possessiveness is at the core of the construct. By using a possessive pronoun, the definition suggests that an individual dually feels ownership for something, but also ownership over something. Whilst individuals can intellectually or rationally consider a target, PO elicits an affective as well as a cognitive response resulting in an emotional connection which goes beyond cognitive boundaries. We have all seen a child state that this toy is "mine" when in an argument with another child, but it is also likely that adults have experienced similar feelings for example when they feel that someone has taken their idea. Whilst this may not have provoked a public utterance of "mine", it may frequently evoke a similar, but internal emotional response. By highlighting both the material or immaterial nature of PO the definition suggests that individuals can feel ownership for both physical objects

and immaterial notions/targets. Finally by indicating a piece of the target it is suggesting that PO can be shared.

Pierce et al. (2003) make a subtle change to their original definition in a subsequent paper to suggest PO is:

> "*the state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is "theirs" (i.e. "It is mine!")"*

(Pierce et al. 2003, p.86)

Thus withdrawing the "material or immaterial in nature". The bracketed section of the quote signifying PO's as more intangible than the previous definition suggests. Given that PO's conceptual core relates to PAO, it feels likely that this was to show a clear demarcation between feelings of ownership for something tangible such as a house, car, or piece of clothing and intangible targets such as our ideas, job role and organisations.

A later article by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) includes the material/immaterial element again, but slightly alters the definition to emphasis the possessive core of the construct:

> *"the state in which an individual feels that an object (i.e., material or immaterial) is experienced possessively"*

(Van Dyne and Pierce 2004, p.442)

This definition provides greater emphasis on possessiveness and re-establishes the notion that PO can be both physical (object) and (something) intangible. By emphasising both material and immaterial objects, this definition suggests individual's may feel ownership for both physical objects such as work tools, as well as immaterial notions such as our ideas. This provides less distinction between psychological and other forms of ownership such as legal ownership, however it does highlight the multifaceted and complexity of PO as a construct i.e., work tools may be legally owned by the organisation, however an individual who uses them daily, may still consider them "mine." Conversely, we may legally own items such as a car, but never feel an emotional

connection of psychological ownership because it's only interest to us is its functionality.

However, the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) definition has not been cited by Pierce or other scholars who have returned to either the 2001 or 2003 definition (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003). The "(it is mine)" element adequately portrays possession to scholars without the need to include the word "possession" which may also explain the exclusion of the bracketed "material or immaterial."

In 2010, Pierce and Jussila introduced a definition for collective PO which has been used by other scholars undertaking research into collective PO in organisations (Rantanen and Jussila 2011; Pierce et al. 2018; Gray et al. 2020; Su et al. 2020):

> *"the collectively held sense (feeling) that this target of ownership (pr a piece of that target) is collectively "ours".*
>
> (Pierce and Jussila 2010, p.812)

There is a change in terminology from a "state" to a "sense" or "feeling" however this may be due to the collective nature of the construct. Throughout PO literature a state, feeling and sense of ownership are used interchangeably by scholars, however this seems to be personal preference rather than any underlying differences in interpretations.

Collective PO is outside of the boundaries of this study and therefore will not be discussed in any further detail.

For the purposes of this study, the Pierce et al. (2003) definition has been adopted as the researcher believes this most closely fits the key components of PO and concurs with other scholars that the bracketed "material or immaterial in nature" is not required.

2.4 Conceptual differences to similar theories

There are other organisational theories which highlight the self and organisation with Pierce et al. (2001) providing some conceptual differences between PO and other organisational-individual theories such as organisational commitment and identification. At the core of PO is this notion of possessiveness relating to questions “what is mine/what do I feel is mine?” and the key motives; efficacy and effectance, self-identity and control which will be discussed later in this chapter (Pierce et al. 2001; Brown et al. 2014b). Organisational commitment differs as it is partly linked to social membership and considers the question “Do I wish to maintain my association with the organisation?” Whilst organisational identification is linked to social identity theory “Do I define myself in a similar way to the organisation?” (Pierce et al. 2001, p.305). There are however posited similarities between all these concepts as they relate to the notion of self-identity and reciprocal relationships (Pierce et al. 2001). Nevertheless, they are conceptually different enough for theorists to consider them to be distinct concepts (Dawkins et al. 2017).

Brown et al. (2014b) built on perceived differences between PO and other organisational constructs to include concepts which relate to the individual such as job satisfaction, experienced meaningfulness, and job involvement. Job satisfaction relates to a pleasurable appraisal of a job role “how does my job make me feel”, Experienced meaningfulness refers to ones perception of the value of a job role “How important is the work I perform”, whilst job involvement refers to a cognitive assessment of how important work is to the individual’s self-concept (Brown et al. 2014b, p.322). Once again none of these constructs relate to this desire to possess that is the fundamental element of PO. Pierce and Jussila (2011) do nevertheless posit that job involvement is one of three key individual differences which effects PO emergence, a point rarely referred to since.

Given the nature of the attachment, core job-related psychological constructs such as a vocation or calling were also considered, however these provide a greater emphasis on a sense of purpose from an internal/external summons (Dik et al. 2009; Duffy et al. 2018) and are therefore significantly different.

2.5 The Development of feelings of Possession and Ownership

This section provides an overview of PO's conceptual core of possessiveness to provide context regarding its initial conceptualisation by Pierce and Colleagues (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004). Whilst this section may seem irrelevant to PO, as this section considers the origins of PO, it is helpful to provide an overview to establish how this concept has moved from feelings for material possessions to the immaterial.

Our daily lives are surrounded by possessions; some practical, some personally meaningful but financially worthless and some that feel central to our lives. Our relationship with our possessions can be a complex, multi-faceted, multi layered phenomenon (Furby 1978a; Mittal 2006) with some possessions becoming part of our extended self and anchoring our identities (Belk 1988).

The process by which these feelings develop is open to debate, with some considering it to be innate (Burk 1900; Porteous 1976), whilst others suggest feelings develop as part of a socialisation process (Brooks and Lewis 1974; Furby 1978a, 1978b). However, having all seen a toddler describe a toy as "mine!" it is clear this connection starts early.

Feelings of ownership towards possessions strikes early with mastering and controlling our environment occurring in young infants as part of the competence/effectance motivation (White 1959; Belk 1988). By controlling objects rather than being controlled by objects, Furby (1978a) posits that individuals can build a more robust sense of self.

Ori et al. (2013) suggest that young children can infer ownership early, partly via a reasoning process which may include a judgement about previous ownership. Fasig (2000) posits that from the age of two children understand who an object belongs to, whilst nursery age children can ascertain that owners have greater rights to control (Kim and Kalish 2009; Rossano et al. 2011). Furby (1978a) suggests that the use and control of possessions

become important from an early age which extends to adulthood, although most frequently mentioned by nine to ten-year olds.

Furby (1978a) considers how our feelings and uses for possessions change during childhood; at age seven to eight possessions are considered for use or to enjoy; age ten to eleven when children develop responsibility for the care of their possessions and during high school when possessions shift to become objects of social power and status e.g., owning highly desired trainers. From this point onwards into adulthood, some possessions start to be considered as an extension of the individual hence one of the reasons why material goods and the construction of self are considered by some to be closely linked. Possessions thereafter can link to our sense of satisfaction, status, social power, and accomplishments displayed through individual's wealth, social standing, group affiliations, as well as career prowess. If we replace the term possessions with work in the prior sentence, it demonstrates the interchangeability of material and immaterial targets and how closely they relate to our identity (which will be discussed further in the comping chapters).

2.6 Psychological Ownership Motives

Having laid out the conceptual core of PO, this section relates to PO in more detail starting with the suggested PO motives and the discussion around these. As previously mentioned, (Pierce et al. 2001b, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) posit three key motives of why individuals may feel the need to possess organisational targets:

Efficacy and Effectance - Pierce et al. (2001b) posit that to feel in control of what we own, individuals explore their environment thus satisfying the need to be efficacious. By having the opportunity to explore and control one's environment, Pierce et al. (2003) suggest it produces intrinsic pleasure and extrinsic satisfaction for individuals.

Furby's (1978a) study of possessions in humans suggested that an often-mentioned characteristic of ownership and a key reason why individuals are motivated by ownership and possessions is the instrumental function that

possessions provide defined as “makes possible some activity or convenience for owner“ (Furby 1978a, p.58) This instrumental function links to White (1959) work on the competence motive and the motivation to have control of one’s environment and thus feel efficacy. From these feelings links build between the object to the extended self.

Different motivations may mean that the same object can be used in the same way in an environment, but provides different motivational outcomes e.g., a bicycle may result in an adult feeling healthier and in control of their weight; for a child, it may be a way to spend time with friends thus satisfying a social need; or it may be a means of getting to school for a teenager. Therefore, several people may own a similar possession, but the desired outcome for everyone may often be different. Furby (1978a) suggests that this form of effectance motivation allows us to control and affect our possessions in a manner which is important to us.

Within the workplace, individuals may work in the same job role, but have a very different view to its instrumental function, depending on their desire for control, but also depending on what is important to them. Someone who enjoys working with others may take great satisfaction in building relationships with colleagues in other departments, whilst others in the same job role may gain more satisfaction in completing complicated tasks. Mastery will come in many different forms and people derive different levels of pleasure from different tasks. However, what will be similar for all individuals is the opportunity to control the target and a choice in how to work (Ferraro et al. 2011; Ye and Gawronski 2016a). One means of control may be via job crafting which will be discussed in section 2.7.

The efficacy or effectance motive has not been questioned by other PO theorists, although it has been renamed self efficacy by some theorists (Avey et al. 2009).

Whilst there is no current PO literature ascertaining the role of efficacy and effectance with early career professionals (ECP), it could be suggested that there may be different levels of efficacy as individuals try to build confidence

within their new positions. This may be facilitated by the amount of control given to WPS by their employers. There are studies suggesting that work integrated learning can have a positive impact on student's self-efficacy (Edwards 2014a; Jaaffar et al. 2019) although these studies include other forms of work placements including internships, volunteering and research assistant roles.

Self-identity is the second motive for PO (Pierce et al 2001) and there are clear links to the literature of possession and ownership. McClelland (1951); Prelinger (1959); Furby (1978a) and Belk (1988) suggest that often when an emotional connection is made with a target it becomes part of our identity or extended self.

As referred to previously, Locke (1690) suggested that as well as owning ourselves, we own our labour and what we produce from our labour. Today however, whilst some individuals in certain roles e.g., artists and farmers may be able to clearly see the fruits of their labour, for many it is a harder distinction to make. Often our output or ideas becomes the ownership of the organisation and whilst some may ensure that ideas contributed are clearly denoted as "my" idea, often the source of ownership within the workplace is harder to define.

Galvin et al. (2015) who considered narcissistic organisational identification suggest that in the same way that a material object can become part of the owner's identity, so to can an intangible object such as an organisation. Possessions often reflect who we are and how we wish to be seen by others and this interactive process helps us emotionally connect and maintain a sense of how we are. We hear phrases such as "They are a company man" which suggests that the individual and the organisational identity has become linked. Nevertheless, given that the organisation is a more distant construct to the job role with fewer daily opportunities to connect, is there enough time and access for employees on fixed term contracts to build this attachment and for the organisation to become part of a WPS identity? Is it important when building a talent pipeline for these young professionals to feel organisational PO and really identify with the organisation or is identifying with the job role enough?

Therefore if an individual feels self-congruity with the organisation and wishes to be seen as working for that organisation, is organisational PO still important?

Given that identity has a place of prominence in the literature related to psychology of possessions and “mine”, whilst other PO theorists have acknowledged identity as a key motive, it has not been developed further. Dittmar (1992) and Hillenbrand and Money (2015), suggest we have an iterative relationship with possessions or other targets helping us to regularly define and reflect on who we are and allow us to show ourselves as we wish to be seen.

Hillenbrand and Money (2015) have considered identity and PO in more detail than other theorists, suggesting that there are four layers of self (core, learned, live and perceived) which relate to our personal and social identities. They suggest that when we make a statement regarding a target, we are also simultaneously making a statement about ourselves thus including something about how we perceive our own identity. They hypothesise that PO manifestation can occur in all four levels of self and occurs if a target allows an individual to act or live in a congruent manner. Therefore, if an individual believes they are altruistic, PO manifestation may occur when working for an organisation which shares their values for example working for a charity. The organisation may be congruent with their core and learnt self allowing a person to maintain their true self “living” their work life being “perceived” by others as giving back. However, using this example, if PO manifestation only occurs at the perceived self levels and an individual works for a charity because they want to look altruistic there may be incongruence resulting in dysfunctional behaviour. There has been very little analysis of these arguments however and further examination of the role of identity within PO may be useful.

Given early career workers are likely to experience a liminal period, identity is particularly pertinent for these individuals as they may still feel like a student but are learning and living “ought and ideal” drivers (Hillenbrand and Money 2015). Individuals may need frequent reiteration from “perceiving” others about their professional persona as without this security they may remain

“betwixt and between” identities and feeling PO for organisational targets may seem unobtainable.

Sense of place or belonging is the final motive/root suggested by Pierce et al, (2001) and provides both physical and psychic health (Porteous 1976). This isn’t only a tangible item such as a house, but something that provides psychological security (Brown et al. 2003). The origins of this motive derive more from philosophers and the ethological concepts of territoriality, rather than research relating to possessions. Simone Weil (1952) suggests that having a place is a “need of the human soul” (Weil 1952, p.41), whilst Porteous (1976) proposes that if we control our territory or the space around us, it satisfies three key areas; identity, security, and stimulation. Individuals control their spaces in a similar way to animals by personalising and defending our territories.

There has been comparatively little research regarding sense of belonging/home within organizational studies. Whilst it has generally been of interest to scholars for generations, relatively fewer studies approach this topic from an organizational stance, and most have considered work and belonging from a negative stance (Hershcovis et al. 2017; Newheiser et al. 2017). Porteous (1976) suggests that our home is at the core of these feelings of identity and whilst our office may become important to us, because other people such as cleaners and workmen can gain regular access, the feelings of “other homes” are never as intense. This contagion could also relate intangible targets such as taking over a job role or tasks from another individual. Avey et al (2009) has suggested that belonging to a department, group or the organisation may mean that the socio-emotional feelings of having a place may be fulfilled. Given that Howell and Hill (2009) suggest that the need to belong is better satisfied by shared activities rather than via possessions, perhaps a sense of belonging also links more closely to our social identities?

Nonetheless as these individuals are new to the workplace and will be part of the organisation for around a year is their sufficient time for them to develop a sense of belonging and so is this motive as relevant?

Whilst Pierce and colleagues (Pierce et al. 2001b, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) suggest a sense of belonging as a motive, there does not seem to be the same level of theoretical underpinning to link this to psychological ownership compared to the other motives. Nonetheless, Avey et al. (2009) does include three questions related to belongingness in his PO measurement which has been verified (Avey et al. 2012) and other scholars have accepted it as one of the three PO motives.

Whilst the above three roots/motives have been widely accepted (by for example Mayhew et al. (2007); Brown et al. (2014b); Hillenbrand and Money (2015); Dawkins et al. (2017); Zhang (2020)), Avey et al (2009) have posited that both accountability and territoriality are further PO motives. They used Higgen's (1997) regulatory focus theory as a basis for their proposals, suggesting that self efficacy, belongingness, self-identity along with accountability, are examples of promotion orientated feelings whereas territoriality would be a preventative focus. They posit that individuals with promotive PO would be more likely to share information, and hold themselves and others accountable, whereas a preventative PO viewpoint would result in territorial behaviour such as withholding information and ideas or showing defensive behaviour. Avey et al (2009) suggest that accountability is a PO motive because of our motivation to ensure we take control for what happens to targets which we believe are an extension of ourselves. In addition, because of our need to possess a space or place, Avey et al (2009) suggest that territoriality may sometimes be a factor in those people with a strong level of PO. This may be low level behaviour such as placing a jacket over the back of a chair to suggest it's "my chair" to more extreme behaviour where individuals withhold information or trying to claim a shared resource as their own (Brown 2009).

Brown et al. (2005a) in an early piece suggested that territoriality is a behavioural outcome and Alok's (2014) research concluded that promotion and preventative PO are different and could not be considered part of a multidimensional construct. Nevertheless, Avey et al (2012) used the same promotion PO scale in a further study exploring ethical leadership and concluded that the measures are substantiated. Olckers (2013) suggests that

Avey et al (2009) has focussed on the cognitive elements of territoriality rather than behavioural aspect and consequently should not be discounted (although this has not been supported by other scholars).

Stimulation (activation or arousal) was briefly mentioned by Pierce et al. (2003) in reference to (Porteous 1976) although less emphasis was originally attached to its potential role as a key motive. Nevertheless (Pierce and Jussila 2011; Rantanen and Jussila 2011; Jussila et al. 2012; Jussila et al. 2015) have included stimulation as a fourth motive during the intervening period. The desire of individuals to seek stimulation within their environments relates to activation/arousal. The desire to create, control, care for, master, and transform organisational targets satisfies our need for stimulation. This motive has not been widely discussed by other scholars who tend to refer to the early four papers (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) when considering theory development.

It is important to understand these motives in such detail because Pierce et al. (2001) suggest that the motives for PO are the reason PO exists. If individuals and organisations understand what motivates us to feel PO for workplace targets (and see PO as a positive thing), then they may be able to facilitate access to these feelings in the workplace. Nevertheless, research to date has not ascertained if any of these motives are more important than others and if different motives are key at different times. This research may therefore identify which motives seem crucial in PO development for this group of ECP.

2.7 Psychological Ownership Antecedents/Routes

As mentioned in section 2:1, Pierce et al. (2001) initial conception conceived three key routes regarding the development of PO feelings for organisational targets. Whilst these routes can emerge separately, it is suggested that they may be interrelated. They posit that any route can facilitate PO, however the greater the number of routes available to an individual, the stronger the feelings of PO for the target.

2.7.1 Controlling the Target

Control within our environment is a fundamental human motive (White 1959). Control satisfies the effectance motive by allowing individuals to feel

that they are “the cause” (Pierce and Jussila 2011) of changes to their environment rather than being controlled within an environment. This then over time facilitates the link to the extended self (Belk 1988; Pierce et al. 2001).

Early PAO research (McClelland and McManus 1941; Prelinger 1959) suggests control to be an important determinant of ownership feelings which led Belk (1988) to posit that the greater our belief of possessing an object or being controlled by an object, the greater the likelihood of it becoming part of self. Furby (1978a) suggested that it is the element of control which can be the trigger to ascertain the likelihood of possessive feelings and the extent that possessions became part of self. People who hoard often experience intense control of their possessions such is the strength of their attachment, with Steketee and Frost (2007) suggesting that even others touching their possessions can feel like a violation of self. Belk (1988) suggests that both control by objects and control over objects may also be viewed as part of self. Control is therefore a significant element in both PAO and PO literature emphasising how it facilitates strong relationships with possessions and immaterial targets.

Individuals have greater opportunities to control their job role rather than their organisation due to the constant use and interaction involved with job tasks. There have been a number of studies looking at the relationship between job-related PO and control. In a study of 239 employees in New Zealand organisations, Pierce et al. (2004) found perceived control of job role mediated the relationship between work environment structure and job-related PO (Pierce et al. 2004). In particular perceived control in a job role can fully mediate the relationship between routine technology and job-related PO. Additionally, perceived control can partially mediate the relationship between high levels of autonomy and participative decision making and job-related PO. Pierce and Jussila (2011) concur demonstrating a positive relationship between job-related PO and experienced job control and in particular complex job design.

Job complexity has been described by Brown et al. (2014b) to include roles which involve breadth and depth of tasks, provide autonomy to explore,

personalise and adapt the scope of tasks along with understanding the intricacies of the overarching role. This in turn provides more opportunities for individuals to perceive control of their job role. Their two studies demonstrate that job-related PO has a positive relationship with job complexity and PO mediates the complexity/performance relationship (Brown et al. 2014b). Zhang (2020) meta-analysis of PO research concurs and suggests managers should provide opportunities for work autonomy which includes an element of control. As these participants are junior staff members, it is unclear if the WPS participants will have access to the depth and breadth of tasks suggested to be required in job complexity, nor if the control of others such as their supervisors will be extended to these participants. Also given the qualitative nature of this study, the research in these thesis will investigate if the experiences with control may differ from other groups of workers and to also consider how control is given to individuals. There is an information gap regarding the transfer of control in relation to organisational PO. By completing a qualitative study, there is an opportunity to explore the relational aspect of PO and how ownership may (or may not) be transferred between supervisor and employee.

Peng and Pierce (2015) posit that as organisations are more abstract than tangible elements of a job role, it is harder to develop organisational PO solely via control route especially within large organisations. Nevertheless, their results show that experienced job PO does positively relate to organisational PO. Other studies (Pierce and Jussila 2011; Peng and Pierce 2015) have also recognised job-related control's influence on organisation PO with job PO indirectly mediating experienced job control and organisational PO. Others such as Chi and Han (2008); Han et al. (2010) suggest a positive relationship between employee participation in decision making and organisational related PO. Liu et al. (2012) findings concur suggesting both participative decision-making and a self-managing team climate positively relate to Organisational PO.

2.7.2 Intimate Knowledge of the Target

It is through a living relationship that we build an attachment to an object (James 1890) which Pierce et al. (2001) posit is true for workplace targets. Individuals may become psychologically tied to a target if there are

frequent interactions providing an opportunity for familiarity and a long-term association. For example, a gardener may feel linked to a garden they have continuously cultivated and spent time enjoying (Weil 1952). In our job roles, this may occur through the day-to-day completion of tasks over a period, but also the opportunity to talk about work to others. When considering the organisation as a target, organisational accessibility and interacting with colleagues to develop social networks may all help to facilitate PO towards an organisation (Zhang 2020) as will the quality and number of interactions (Jussila et al. 2015). Tenure within the job role or organisation is considered crucial by Pierce et al. (2003) to develop these feelings, although no guidance is provided regarding this time period. This study hopes to provide a greater understanding of the required PO tenure and if it is possible to develop feelings of PO when working on a relatively short-term assignment.

As the participants in this study will have worked in their organisations for less than a year, there is an opportunity to ascertain the importance of intimate knowledge as a PO route and if it is possible to feel this way about a target relatively quickly. If so, what impact, if any might it have on an individual's development of psychological ownership.

2.7.3 Investing Self in Target

From the literature regarding ownership and possessions, it is important for individuals to have the opportunity to create, invest psychic energy and shape their possessions to aid and develop self-identity (Sartre 1956; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Belk 1988). This builds on Locke (1690) work who conceived that we associate our work outcomes with our labour and our labour is part of ourselves. Pierce et al. (2001) and Chi and Han (2008) posit that the same is also true regarding the entwinning of self and organisational targets for the development of PO. The opportunity to invest self into our work via our mastery and through creating new systems, processes or products helps build that notion of "mine" (Pierce et al. 2003). Employee participation in decision making and self managing team environments provide opportunities to invest self in targets (Chi and Han 2008; Han et al. 2010; Liu et al. 2012). In an early paper, Parker et al. (1997) suggested perceived responsibility and concern for a target is found within

those with a strong ownership perspective. Pierce et al. (2001); Pierce et al. (2004) suggest that feelings of responsibility are an outcome of PO and therefore PO and responsibility are two different states.

Job design has been posited as a means of facilitating this investment of self in job role targets (Pierce et al. 2009a; Peng and Pierce 2015), however very few researchers have looked beyond job design which given the recent interest in job crafting by organisational scholars could be an oversight. Whilst job crafting is related to the work design literature, there is a clear difference; work design is a top-down process in which managers create job roles and tasks whilst job crafting is a bottom-up process in which individuals are motivated to adapt elements of their job roles over a period (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001)

Job crafting is a proactive means in which employee's change the physical and cognitive boundaries of their job role to enhance their overall job satisfaction (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001; Demerouti 2014). This personal job reframing, or remoulding is considered to relate to changing task, cognitive and relational boundaries and provides an individual the means of shaping a job role to fit their skills, knowledge, and motivation (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). Literature in this area has focussed on either the predominantly qualitative side characterised above, or the crafting job demands, and job resources perspective (JD-R) focused on antecedents which has mainly been detailed from a quantitative perspective (Lazazzara et al. 2020). There are three elements to JD-R; seeking job resources, seeking job challenges, and reducing job demands. Given these elements require an investment of self, should organisations and line manager's encourage job crafting if they wish to facilitate job-related PO? Likewise, a recent addition to the job crafting literature, career crafting that asserts that in the same way individuals can craft the parameters of their job for a better personal fit (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). Individuals may engage in career crafting which involves the same proactive behaviour, but related to their goals (Tims 2020). They suggest two elements in the career crafting survey which relate to proactive career reflections and proactive career construction (Tims 2020).

There have been three studies which develop the links between job crafting and psychological ownership, although two of the articles are not currently available in English. Naeem et al. (2021) studied employees working at a large pharmaceutical organisation in Pakistan using JD-R perspective. They ascertained that job-related PO mediates the relationship between job crafting and expansion orientated crafting such as seeking job challenges/job resources and transformational leadership. They suggest that the motives of PO may lead to proactive job crafting behaviours in which individuals look to seek out further job-related opportunities and resources such as autonomy or seeking feedback. However, they did not find a relationship between job PO and reducing job demands i.e., diminishing the emotional impact of job role or managing work life balance. Given very few studies have considered the dark side of PO, this element will be discussed further in chapter 2.5. Nonetheless, job crafting and in particular task crafting does seem to provide opportunities for control and self investment which are important routes to PO (Naeem et al. 2021).

2.7.4 Safety

Following a meta-analysis of 141 PO studies, safety has recently been posited as an emerging antecedent (Zhang 2020) which allows individuals to be themselves without suffering any repercussions to their career or their perceptions of self. In this context safety is suggested to include trust, organisational justice regarding perceptions of fairness, relational closeness and perceived organisational support including feeling valued and supported. From the meta-analysis they suggest that safety is a vital component in PO emergence although do admit that a limitation of their study is that it is based on current PO literature. There are very few journal articles relating to organisational PO and safety or to any of the posited four elements of safety. Brown et al. (2014b) examined the role of trust in organisations and its moderating influence on territoriality and psychological ownership. Results suggest that whilst territorial behaviour can be reduced in high trust environments, for those individuals who still display territorial characteristics they may be perceived as self-serving and less favourably perceived by their peers. Elsewhere Olckers and Enslin (2016a) found trust mediates the relationship between PO and turnover intentions. Whilst, Chi and Han (2008)

study posited that organisational justice mediates the relationship between three forms of organisational ownership including PO. Given the recent release in (Zhang 2020) article, there are no current responses to this posited antecedent.

2.7.5 Self Congruity

Self-congruity links to the mere and endowment effects (Heider 1958; Beggan 1992) whereby individuals look favourably on objects they own due to the psychological attachment made. Morewedge (2021) suggests that this attachment is stronger when the object links to an individual's social identity. As a recently suggested PO route, there are no studies relating to this proposed PO route/antecedent nevertheless, if we refer back to theories of PAO, there are similarities to Ferraro et al. (2011) self-worth links. In the same way that we build stronger attachments to objects that link to our self-worth, we may feel stronger attachments to our job role or our organisation if we believe it relates to our identity. In this study these are individuals at the start of their career, when social identity can be important, self-congruity may be important in building an attachment and developing job-related PO.

Two of the aforementioned routes to PO "intimate knowledge of the target" and "investing self in target" (Pierce et al 2001) suggest individuals need a time period in the workplace to form attachments, although the timings regarding manifestation have not been provided in this work or any other. However, if we consider our relationship with possessions, we are aware of examples of instant attraction (be it a new cuddly toy for a child or a car for an adult) which results in an immediate feeling of mine! Pierce et al. (2003) suggested that some individuals might build strong initial attractions, but for most it will be a lengthy, iterative experience. As mentioned previously, given this group of WPS will only be in the workplace for around one year, it is an ideal opportunity to provide greater understanding to potential timescales and ascertain its importance when discussing PO.

Nonetheless, whilst the routes are helpful in building our understanding of PO, as it is a complex, multifaceted construct, our attachment to organisational targets are more intricate and nuanced than current discussion of PO routes suggests. Whilst Pierce et al (2003) did highlight PO complexity in early

research and called for further work regarding factors leading to PO emergence, research since has negated to consider these intricacies in any detail although Brown et al, (2014) did consider the routes to PO alongside job complexity. However, this mainly concentrated on the role of job complexity within PO rather than the PO routes and therefore this notion has not been adequately studied.

Nevertheless, if we consider PO it feels plausible that some of us may have strong immediate attachments to certain organisational targets for a variety of different reasons. One explanation may be that prior building blocks from other facets of our life (such as being part of a university society or playing branded video games) facilitates feelings towards certain work-place targets. For example, if you undertake a marketing degree and move into a marketing role, have you already "invested self in the target of marketing" via your studies which may result in the development of early feelings of PO for the job role. Or through buying products from an organisation or having family and friends work at a company may this facilitate "intimate knowledge of the organisation?" Therefore, if an individual has "prior" related attachments to certain organisations is it possible to speed up feelings of PO for organisational targets thus providing a bridge to these new attachments?

It would be naive to suggest that this alone might facilitate feelings of attachment and scholars from theories of PAOs provide other potential factors. The Mere effect (Heider 1958; Beggan 1992) suggests that people are more likely to favour objects which they own and crucially their research found no time element influenced results. Additional research previously mentioned by Greenwald (2002) and Ye and Gawronski (2016) suggest that strong mental associations between the self-node and the object node can form if congruous, whilst the action-based model of dissonance (Harman-Jones 1999) and research by Brehm (1956) which suggests that behavioural commitment reduces dissonance. Therefore, ownership by choice may be key element when enhancing self-PO target congruity. Subsequently if an individual believes that they actively made a choice in choosing a particular workplace target and have a key desire to work for a particular job or

organisation, this may facilitate early development of PO towards organisational targets.

Furthermore, Ferraro et al (2010) suggested the self-worth link to possessions and therefore if our job role or the organisation is important to our self-worth, we are more likely to become self invested as it is important to us. For example, someone who is passionate about sport, may gain a self-worth match when working for a sports club and so is willing to invest more of themselves.

Conversely, some individuals may not invest as much of themselves into organisational targets as their self-worth is tied to other targets such as family or hobbies and/or the organisational target may not be as attractive to them. In these instances, feelings of PO manifestation and development may be slower or may not occur at all.

Rather than assessing if and how the aforementioned routes develop an individual's PO, scholars have more frequently researched further organisational antecedents with several studies concerning leadership including ethical leadership (Avey et al. 2012) and transformational leadership (Avey et al. 2009; Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Park et al. 2013).

Additionally, the relationship between autonomy and job satisfaction is partially mediated by organisational PO (Mayhew et al. 2007), whilst the Henssen et al. (2014) study suggested the link between autonomy and PO also mediated the relationship with stewardship behaviour.

With regards to job-related PO, suggested antecedents include three work environment sources (technology, autonomy and participative decision making) mediate the relationship between experienced control and job-related PO (Pierce et al. 2004); autonomy partially mediating the relationship with job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Mayhew et al. 2007), whilst Kaur et al. (2013) suggested employee's spiritual and emotional intelligence predicted PO. Dai et al. (2021) study within the hotel industry suggested that PO mediates the relationship between regulatory focus, and work environment and Naeem et al. (2021) study found a link between job PO and seeking job challenges/resources.

The three original PO routes have been accepted by scholars with studies showing the importance of control as a route to PO (Pierce et al. 2004; O' Driscoll et al. 2006; Liu et al. 2012). Investing self in target and intimate knowledge of target have generally been shown via employee participation in decision making and self managing team environments, although these studies have not been replicated. After a 20-year gap, safety has been posited as a new PO route (Zhang 2020) but will need further verification.

The initial three routes to PO are clearly established within the PO literature but feel less accessible to individuals at the start of their career as it will take time to have intimate knowledge of organisational targets, control targets or invest themselves in these targets. However, is it more complex than this and are there other factors which may contribute to PO development such as the culture of the organisation or the line manager? The following section will consider PO emergence and refer to the PO routes as part of this.

2.7.6 Possessions and the Extended Self

The idea that possessions and our self identities are closely linked is not a new supposition with Locke (1690) suggesting that as well as owning ourselves, we own our labour and the products of our labour. This notion of linking self with possessions was also posited by James (1890):

"A man's self is the sum total of all that he CAN call his, not only his body…but his clothes and house…his reputation and works."

(James 1890, pp.291-292)

Sartre (1943) builds on these ideas suggesting objects aid the development of self and through understanding what we possess, we understand ourselves. This notion that having and being are closely entwinned allows individuals the opportunity to search and find who they are. Therefore, possessions go beyond their physicality – something that we may buy or own, to becoming things we believe we possess or believe is "ours." It allows us to mentally "try out" objects to see if they fit with who we believe we are or who we feel we would like to become (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton

1981). Sartre (1956) suggests control and mastery is important, along with creating and knowing. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) and Ahuvia (2005), concur, positing that an investment of energy or psychic energy is important. Watkins et al. (2015) suggests possession requires controlling, caring, and managing items linking to Locke (1690) idea of owning the products of our labour. This control and investment of energy is very ritualistic allowing individuals to turn an object into a meaningful personal possession (McCracken 1986).

Mittal (2006) also highlights forms of investment and energy when positing how possessions become part of self. Mittal more specifically divides the possession-self process into six key elements which occur prior and post-acquisition. Having choice in your acquisition and opportunities to invest resources occur prior to acquisition. This may include the investment of time, money, or energy. Sartre (1956) believed that buying possessions is also a form of creation because of the investment of energy.

Post-acquisition processes include investment by use and bonding which can also help an additional process of making memories. Finally, he signalled that collections are more likely to build stronger self-possession links due to the investment of time and effort in creating and maintaining a group of possessions.

Research by Ye and Gawronski (2016b) concurs with the importance of choice, having considered the relationship between implicit self-object and ownership. They posit that ownership by choice is important when enhancing self-object congruity. Building on previous research regarding dissonance (Brehm 1956; Harmon-Jones and Mills 1999) suggesting that behavioural commitment reduces dissonance, the act of choosing an object, helps strengthen our preference for it. This is also an act of control, so perhaps it is the dual action of releasing dissonance and feeling in control which helps develop person-object identity.

Whilst there may be a special bond between the individual and object, both Belk (1988) and Dittmar (1992) remind us that we are experiencing a three-

way relationship (self-object-other), partly from rivalry with others wanting what we have, but also because of our own desire to protect what is ours.

Additionally, we may gift, loan, or buy objects for others. Giving possessions to others may also be a means of extending self (Sartre 1956) and a special form of control. For the gift giver it may help connect the past, present and future creating a narrative which cements the extended self. However, for the receivers of the object this contagion can have both positive and negative connotations depending on the gift giver (Belk 1988). Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) suggested that individual's favourite possessions were often gifts from loved ones because it becomes laden with memory markers. However, in other instances the receiver may struggle for the object to become part of their extended self due to beliefs about contamination.

Other writers such as Belk (1988); Watkins et al. (2015) see contamination as another means of integrating a possession into the extended self. Also referred to as contagion within the consumer behaviour literature, contamination can be a ritualist means of personalising an object so that it becomes part of the extended self. However as mentioned above, items shared with others may also feel contaminated as if there is a transfer of "essence" or "soul". There may be negative contamination such as clothes tried on by other shoppers (Argo et al. 2006); items owned by someone disliked (Rozin et al. 1989) or conversely sharing items with someone you dislike (Kramer and Block 2014). Alternatively, there may be positive contamination; items worn or owned by the famous (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005) or touching an object owned by a high performer to increase their performance (Kramer and Block 2014) are two posited means. Whilst contamination has not been discussed in organisational PO, it could be possible for individuals to feel contaminated by the transfer of a job role, project, or task from another resulting in either positive or negative emotions depending on the individual.

Many individuals do however undertake divestment rituals which allow owners to ritually cleanse and transition meaningful possessions from one's life whilst still maintaining private meanings. In some instances, shared meanings will be

developed if the buyer and seller have commonalities facilitating a shared self-boundary, however in most instances, individuals are able to move objects from “me” to “not me” (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005).

This notion of a possession narrative highlights the biographical nature of possessions and their active role in memory making. This includes both favourite possessions which may demonstrate someone’s individuality or heritage and less favourite possessions which individual’s feel are no longer part of them (Kleine et al. 1995; Ahuvia 2005; Watkins et al. 2015). This notion posits that narratives actively connect objects and people and act as memory markers for the stories in our lives. Objects have an active past, present and future often with a variety of owners and when we divest of objects, they often become part of someone else’s life (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005).

Whilst the nature/nurture arguments are still debated, it seems clear that possessions play a big part in an individual’s life from childhood through to old age. Possessions and the self are closely entwinned providing a continuing journey between who we are, who we want to be and how we wish to be seen. In the PO literature, we would expect to see this close link with the extended self.

For our possessions to become part of our extended self, some psychic investment is required which often comes in the form of possession rituals such as creating, controlling, caring, contaminating, knowing, using, mastering, or buying items (Sartre 1956; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Belk 1988; Ahuvia 2005; Mittal 2006; Watkins et al. 2015). Possessions symbolise something of the self, be it a gold medal won at a sports day or the title on your door which reads Managing Director. Possessions can be functional as well as denote status, social power, and accomplishments. The ones that signify who we are change status from being “mine” to being part of “me” (Belk 1988; Ferraro et al. 2011).

Within the PO literature, control and identity are likely to feature strongly with some consideration for how targets become part of “me” via rituals, choice, or the biography of the target. Finally, we would expect to see literature

regarding divestment rituals demonstrating how targets move from “mine” to “not me.”

Whilst the discussion regarding possessions and the extended self mainly highlights continuity for a stable self-identity, societal changes along with new type of possessions are challenging our ideas and will be discussed in more detail later. The following section will return to PO and ascertain why we feel ownership and the ways in which it emerges.

2.8 Psychological Ownership Emergence

Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) allude to the complexity of PO emergence in early PO research suggesting a combination of elements including PO motives, routes, individual and target factors are required to facilitate PO. This complexity however has been overlooked by many scholars with only a few scholars recognising the need for wider understanding of how PO emerges in organisational targets (McLntyre et al. 2009; Pierce and Jussila 2011; Brown et al. 2014b; Jussila et al. 2015).

Pierce et al. (2003) suggest that for feelings of ownership to emerge, targets must be attractive, accessible, with opportunities for individuals or groups to manipulate and develop them via the three posited routes (control, intimate knowledge, and investment in self). For example, a job role which includes lots of opportunities for autonomy and job crafting will be accessible and easily manipulated. Whether it is attractive will however depend on the incumbent’s self congruence (Morewedge 2021) demonstrating the importance of understanding individual differences along with the role of the organisation in facilitating the development of PO towards organisational targets. Country culture has been explored (Peng and Pierce 2015), however organisational culture has tended to be seen as a by-product of areas such as the work environment structure (Brown et al. 2014b) rather than considering a more holistic view of the organisation. Given that PO can be a partly learned behaviour and is also a complex construct, it is likely that a variety of organisational touch points will influence how accessible, attractive and manipulatable a target is. Pierce et al. (2003) suggests organisational culture should be explored further, although this has not yet occurred.

As mentioned in the prior section, Brown et al. (2014b) suggests that the three original PO routes mediate the relationship between job complexity and job-related PO. Job complexity is characterised by a depth and breadth of tasks which allows individuals to take control and have influence over many tasks. The more complex nature of the tasks means that there are greater opportunities to invest self and physic energy into the job role, whilst to understand complicated tasks it is important to have intimate knowledge of the role. There are some differing opinions related to job complexity, however, with Jussila et al. (2015) highlighting that if roles are too complex this may inhibit an individual's desire to possess the target. Furthermore, in later research, Pierce and Brown (2019) suggest that weak situations better suit the development of PO in the workplace as it allows an individual's personality or attitudes shape behaviour rather than the current situation. They suggest that thoughtful job design provides opportunities for decision making which allows the individual to shape and control targets rather than feeling controlled by a situation. This raises questions regarding the importance of job complexity vs intimate knowledge and at what point it becomes detrimental to PO development. Is it actually the alchemy of personal characteristics, target attributes, PO motives, job complexity and routes combined with ingredients will slightly differ in shape and form for each individual?

Moreover, the aforementioned research suggests that individuals new to the workplace are unlikely to develop PO, nor would they be interested in its development because of the short-term nature of their tenure. Yet given PO has its basis in theories relating to possession and ownership which in turn suggest that individuals can have an instant attachment to possessions (Furby 1978a; Belk 1988), we could surmise that it is equally possible to have quick, yet strong attachments to workplace targets especially when related to PO motives such as identity or sense of belonging. From the points raised in section 2.5, the PO literature diverges from theories of possession regarding this point. Whilst this may be true, there is no research to confirm or disprove these suggestions.

Consequently, individuals participating in a work placement are an interesting group to study as they perform a variety of job roles in different departments,

within a range of different industry sectors and are often new to the full-time work force. Their roles involve a reasonably short tenure and may lack the complexity and diversity of tasks compared to other populations studied. This research may help us answer some of the many outstanding questions related to PO development in ECPs.

Pierce and Jussila (2011) book on Psychological Ownership discuss what they believe are three key individual differences:

Individualism/collectivism may mean that some individuals with a more individualistic self-concept may talk about “my” versus those with collectivist mindsets talking about “our”. Individualism/collectivism may have an impact on the self-object-other relationship and how individuals deal with the rivalry and territorial feelings that can arise from strong related feelings of PO. Wang et al. (2018) believe that whilst individuals with high levels of job-related PO may undertake more organisational citizenship behaviour and be committed to achieve in their job role, they may also engage in claiming and defensive behaviour with others to ensure the boundaries of what they believe is “mine”.

Job Involvement is posited as the degree to which work is central to the life satisfaction of an individual or how important an individual perceives work in their life or for their self-esteem or their identity (Lodahl and Kejner 1965; Lawler and Hall 1970; Saleh and Hosek 1976). Pierce and Jussila (2011) suggest that job involvement may be an important boundary condition in the development of job-related PO, although once again, no further work has been undertaken to assess these claims.

There is conceptual ambiguity regarding Job involvement, however, with Solana and Alicia (2019) suggesting there are at least four conceptualisations of job involvement. Their systematic review suggests that since 2008, most theorists have used the definition and instrument introduced by (Kanungo 1982) relating to both job and work involvement “A cognitive or belief state of psychological identification” (Kanungo 1982).

It is likely that job involvement, work design and/ or job crafting will facilitate possession rituals such as those utilised when building attachments with targets (McCracken 1986; Russell 1988; Pierce et al. 2001, 2003). PO rituals

may allow individuals to claim something as “theirs”, providing them the opportunity to cultivate, control, care for, contaminate, know, master, or claim potential PO targets. Whilst possession rituals have been alluded to by Pierce et al. (2003) as a means of expediating PO emergence, it has not been explored in any detail. As discussed previously, rituals may be particularly prevalent for this group of individuals as they are at the start of their career. Ritualised behaviour which facilitates shared organisational and departmental culture and meanings often become visible to new starters in both formalised and informal means. The transference of a “handover book” from one work placement student to another may be a symbolic form of shared meaning, facilitating the new placement students transition into the workplace, but also providing the outgoing student with an opportunity to parade their “intimate knowledge of the job role” via this divestment ritual. Whilst many rituals are aimed at attaching the target to the individual’s extended self, there are also divestment rituals designed to disengage with targets when an individual leaves a role or organisation (Pierce et al. 2003) and this will be discussed in section 2.8 regarding the demise of PO.

Lastly, **Organisational based self-esteem** is the final posited individual difference suggested by Pierce and Jussila (2011) which relates to individuals’ perception of how important, worthwhile, and meaningful they are within the domain of the organisation. Once again there are limited research in this area, however Xiao-Fu et al. (2014) research suggested that organisational based self-esteem mediates the relationship between organisational psychological ownership and employee’s positive organisational behaviours.

To conclude, because of the complexity of the PO construct, our understanding of PO emergence is still limited. (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) provided early discussion points for theorists to assess, which unfortunately has never really caught the interest of scholars. Given the rich, nuanced theorising that could have taken place at the early stages of a new construct, it feels that there is so much that we still need to understand about PO emergence and development.

2.9 Measuring PO and Theories of Possession and Ownership

Organisational Studies have principally used the survey method for PO research, with two tribes of measures having formed. There is the seven-item measure designed by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) emphasising feelings of possession in general statements such as “This is MY organisation”. Dawkins et al. (2017) suggests several methodological concerns regarding measurement in particular the lack of clarity concerning item selection and the way in which questions relate to the three PO motives. As statements are unspecific the association with the efficacy-effectance motive is unclear. This can also be seen with the connection to sense of place/home which needs further refinement. Furthermore, whilst the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) measure is a favoured choice of many theorists, poor face validity and factor loading concerns has resulted in partial replication on occasions (Mayhew et al. 2007; Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Park et al. 2013).

Avey et al (2009) produced a sixteen-item measure reflecting the five items which they believe make up promotive and preventative orientated PO (belonging, self efficacy, self-identity, accountability, and territoriality) and is based on both inductive and deductive processes to generate items. The first four items form promotion PO scales, whilst territoriality is used to measure preventative PO. Concerns have been raised suggesting that promotive and preventative PO are two different dimensions (Alok 2014) and if territoriality is a motive or an outcome of PO (Brown et al. 2005a; Olckers and Schaap 2013; Dawkins et al. 2017) However, this survey has been validated Avey et al. (2009); Avey et al. (2012) and in comparison, to the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) survey, clearly shows connections between items and PO motives.

Olckers (2013); Olckers and Schaap (2013) built on Avey et al. (2009) survey developing a thirty-item scale using promotion and prevention orientated PO to create the South African Psychological Ownership Questionnaire. They included two further dimensions (autonomy and responsibility); however self-efficacy was withdrawn at scale development stage due to the sample group differing interpretation of the term. Olckers has since returned to the Avey measure (Olckers and Enslin 2016b; Olckers and Zyl 2016). In addition self-identity and sense of belonging loaded onto one factor. In China four items

from the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) scale was adapted into Chinese by Chi and Han (2008).

Given the concerns regarding the Van Dyne and Pierce (2004) measure and the failure of other alternatives to capture the attention of scholars I would suggest further work needs to be undertaken to substantiate measures before further work considering antecedents is undertaken. Moreover, given that PO is a complex topic and much work is still required on its initial conceptualisation, would not some methodological diversity also be beneficial?

Law (2004) suggests that real life is "messy" and those in social sciences studies should accept that simplicity isn't always possible. Whilst dominant methods may provide understanding at one level, they often are unable to capture the complexity and ambiguity found in human life. If we compare research in PO compared to those in possession and ownership, there are far greater examples of methodological diversity within theories of possession and ownership. This allows greater opportunities to be "messy" as well as use dominant methods which in this instance are qualitative approaches. Overall methodological diversity in PAO is found via; theoretical articles (Furby 1978a; Belk 1988; Mittal 2006; Belk 2010, 2013; Belk 2014; Watkins et al. 2015; Molesworth et al. 2016; Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017; Denegri-Knott et al. 2020);semi structured interviews (Ahuvia 2005; Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2009; Bardhi et al. 2012), phenomenological interviews (Karanika and Hogg 2013); photo elicited interviews (Tian and Belk 2005); surveys (Ferraro et al. 2011); a mixture of studies including scenario based online experiments with surveys (Fritze et al. 2020), experiments and questionnaires (Morrison and Johnson 2011; Kramer and Block 2014; Ye and Gawronski 2016a); participant observation (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005) and participant observation and projective techniques (Kleine et al. 1995; Masset and Decrop 2016).

By utilising a diverse array of methods, it might be said that theorists can unravel the messy (Law 2004). Yet scholars within PAO have recently questioned the topic's methodological diversity during the Interpretive Consumer Research Conference in 2019, contributing to a Journal of Marketing Management article, (Denegri-Knott et al. 2020). It was posited that whilst there has been diversity of methods within this area, most scholars have

relied on qualitative approaches and this underlying historical context might benefit from recent advances in technology. An example provided would be data tracking to demonstrate the "doing" of digital possession work. They also suggest that the historical context of PAO research may influence theoretical underpinning used in comparisons between digital and tangible possessions, whereas "bolder theorising and methodological innovation" (Denegri-Knott et al. 2020, p.943) might ascertain digital possessions as a stand-alone topic not a poor relation to the past.

If we look at PO studies across all areas, methods utilised include; Wood (2003) study of students PO which measured feelings of PO via a survey with both numerical evaluations and open ended; Kirk used a variety of methods which included laboratory experiments followed by a survey to assess individuals PO territorial responses to certain tangible and intangible objects; Gray et al. (2020) research regarding collective PO in creative teams used a mixed methodology; whilst Matilainen et al. (2017) study of forest owners and Cocieru et al. (2019a) study of football club's supporters are rare because of the use of interviews. This is compared to the 141 quantitative studies used by Zhang (2020) in their PO meta-analysis and clearly demonstrates the lack of methodology diversity currently found in PO research.

Given the reliance on the survey method with the resultant PO measurement ambiguity I suggest that PO is at a methodological junction that would benefit from utilising alternative methods when developing and substantiating current claims. By exploring lived, messy experiences concerning the intricacies of PO, there is an opportunity to examine more closely the undoubted complexities of the concept and provide "heterogeneity and variation" within social science subject areas (Law 2004). Whilst qualitative studies may not be generalizable, the rich data provided would undoubtedly benefit PO scholars thus providing a much-needed detailed tapestry of individual's feelings.

2.10 Psychological Ownership Sampling

Alongside the measurement of PO, PO sampling has tended to rely on homogeneous groups.

The literature regarding theories of possession and ownership provide an overview into how feelings for our possessions develop and change over our lifetime (Belk, Furby etc), however PO sampling has commonly focussed on full time knowledge workers with several years' work experience within an organisation (for example: Pierce et al. 2003; Pierce et al. 2004**;** Van Dyne 2004; Avey et al. 2009; Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Avey et al. 2012; Brown et al. 2014; Wang et al. 2018). This narrowness in sampling has resulted in gaps in the PO landscape especially concerning key periods such as initial PO manifestation along with ignoring a significant proportion of organisational populations. Sampling decisions may be partly explained due to the posited routes to PO: controlling the target, intimate knowledge of the target and investing self in target (Pierce et al 2001) which suggest some level of autonomy and longevity within the role/organisation which we will now consider in more detail.

PO research has focussed mainly on the establishment / middle career phases of individuals (Cron 1984; Cron and Slocum 1986; Greenhaus et al 2010; Griffin et al 2014; Johnson and LaFrance 2016; Super 1975, 1980) often with a mean/average age of samples in their thirties (including Pierce et al. 2004, average age of respondents 35.6; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004, average age 34; Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011 mean age 39; Avey et al. 2012 mean age 41; Alok 2014 average age 31.76; Brown et al. 2014 average age in study one 36.7 years and in study two, age 32; Wang et al. 2018, average age in study one 33.77). As scholars have mainly considered antecedents of PO the intention of prior studies has not been to consider how PO alters over time and the factors that might induce a change in those feelings. However, this does mean that the academic community has very limited understanding of how PO develops and perhaps more importantly no clear understanding of PO manifestation. Given the large numbers of young people employed in our workplaces who have the opportunity to develop PO at a time point when their professional identities are still developing and malleable, this gap in the psychological ownership literature seems to be a pertinent place to investigate further. During the organisational entry or initiation phase considered to be the first two years of employment, (Dalton et al. 1977; Cron 1984; Cron and Slocum 1986; Greenhaus and Parasuraman 1986; Greenhaus et al. 2010)

individuals are managing the demands of transitioning from education into working life assessing their future “possible selves” (Markus and Nurius, 1986). By researching individuals at the start of their career there is an opportunity for longitudinal studies which would provide us with a greater understanding of the way in which PO might appear then wax and wane during an individual’s career.

This age group is of particular interest due to the changing nature of their relationship with possessions compared to previous generations. This group have had a greater exposure to brands via online channels which may influence the attractiveness of some workplace targets. Certain organisations with very desirable products or image may result in individuals having already built mental relationships with said organisation. Organisations within areas such as sport, clothing or technology can be very prevalent in a young individual’s life which results in said individual already feeling as if they have an intimate knowledge of the organisation or have invested themselves in the organisation. These changing forms of ownership may therefore have implications for the development of PO in individuals which will be discussed further in the following section.

2.11 Changing nature of Possessions

In the 20 years since PO research have gained traction, research regarding theories regarding possession and ownership have also progressed. This section will provide an overview of these changes.

As individuals move away from physical possessions to newer forms of ownership such as digital goods and shared access services, ownership of possessions is becoming less clearly defined and thus our preconceptions about possessions and the extended self are also being questioned (Belk 2013). There are a range of different terms used to describe such services including amongst others; access-based consumption (Bardhi et al. 2012), sharing and collaborative consumption (Belk 2010; Botsman and Rogers 2010; Belk 2014), access-based services (Fritze et al. 2020), co-production (Humphreys and Grayson 2008), digital consumption objects (Molesworth et

al. 2016), digital virtual goods (Watkins et al. 2015) and digital possessions (Denegri-Knott et al. 2020). Some of these terms overlap, but they generally refer to items such as smartphones and laptops, digital items such as social media and gaming sites, bits of code and access services such as bike or car sharing. They differ from more traditional forms of possession in that they are may be immaterial, accessed and consumed via devices, co-created or may not involve a formal transfer of ownership (Belk 2010; Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012; Belk 2013; Belk 2014; Molesworth et al. 2016)

Early research regarding digital products posited concerns for the possession-self relationship; consumers saw digital products as intangible and easily replaced, (Watkins and Molesworth 2012), less easy to control and lacked social visibility which provided less certainty for consumers regarding the nature of ownership. All of which raised concerns by scholars regarding the relationship between these new possessions and the extended self (Siddiqui and Turley 2006; Petrelli and Whittaker 2010; Watkins and Molesworth 2012; Belk 2013)

Later research has however demonstrated that our relationship with these possessions may be more nuanced than originally posited (Denegri-Knott et al. 2020). This may be partly due to experience as they become part of daily life and so accepted as possessions, but also the original viewpoint may have been too simplistic. For example, Orth et al. (2019) study of owners of digital products suggested owners feel meaning associated to the digital contents they can access via their phone rather than the actual tangible phone itself, reversing the view that it is easier to feel ownership for the tangible vs the intangible. Belk (2013) suggests that self is now more jointly constructed via online sites such as Facebook allowing for affirmation of individual's identity via likes and shared photo's/experiences. The Facebook timeline allows individual's memory markers providing symbolic anchors of key experiences and documenting when they purchased new possessions. All of which can reiterate an individual's values and sense of self. These digital platforms encourage attachment to sites via this perpetual game of posting and liking. The psychic energy involved in establishing a presence commodifies

the self (Molesworth et al. 2016), but simultaneously also merges having and being (Sartre 1956).

However Digital Virtual Goods (DVG's) such as social media and video games consoles also fragment ownership as often technology organisations own the Intellectual Property. Whilst they provide individuals the rights to own the information they post or curate (Watkins et al. 2015), they are unable to move their "Spotify" play list to another site nor move their avatar across games thus limiting the same level of control that tangible possessions provide individuals (Molesworth et al. 2016). Nevertheless, there is freedom on these sites to disembody, reembody, cultivate, co-create and provide continuity (Belk 2013; Watkins et al. 2015)which bear some similarities to the possession rituals of old.

2.11.1 Liquidity of Possessions

Based on Bauman (2000); Bauman (2007) work on liquid modernity, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) have provided a different perspective about the changing nature of consumerism. They suggest that liquid consumption brings less stability and more uncertainty in life which may result in the loss of opportunities for possessions to anchor our lives and aid identity development. They suggest that a consumption continuum or spectrum now exists with solid consumption and liquid consumption at either end. As society shifts towards liquidity via digital consumption items (DCO's), fast fashion and shared services there may be some change in the way in which we view our possessions, with millennials and younger generations having more frequent experiences of liquidity than previous generations.

They suggest that ephemerality, access-based consumption and dematerialisation make up this new form of liquid consumption in contrast to the solidity, stabilised, long-standing commitments of the past. In this new liquidity, fluidity and nimbleness is required to deal with the instability and uncertainty that may occur, and precarious workplace positions or industries may result in greater use of the sharing economy and liquid consumption.

From an earlier study of global nomads (individuals who have lived in many different countries and were not anchored to one location) Bardhi et al. (2012) discovered that some people have a more detached and fluid relationship with possessions which they call “liquid relationships” (Bardhi et al. 2012). They concluded that objects that may seem important and part of our extended self during one part of our life may seem less important or irrelevant during another part. This may be due to the situational factors of the owners who are an atypical group, however Masset and Decrop (2016) concur with the suggestion of liquid relationships having studied the relationship tourists have with items bought on holiday. Their results intimate that whilst some relationships with possessions endured over a long period of time, with other possessions the relationship changed. Possessions aid identity construction, yet how we perceive ourselves is not static and during key moments of change (such as a house or job move, or a pandemic) we realise that some possessions no longer reflect who we are.

As individuals move along the consumption continuum toward liquidity, their consumption habits may follow a similar path to the global nomads involving more transactional relationships with fewer emotional attachments for shorter duration. Bardhi and Eckhardt (2017) suggest that consumers now desire ephemerality because it allows them the temporality to justify the constant upgrading that has become synonymous with modern day Western life. Bellezza et al. (2017) concur having discovered an “upgrade effect” that occurs with mobile phones where individuals consciously or unconsciously mistreat objects such as phones to justify the latest upgrade.

Liquid experiences also fulfil the desire for ephemerality and provide a new take on Sartre (1956) having and being, Having experiences rather than possessions become more important to self because of their fluidity and easier links to demonstrate self-identity especially via social media (Carter and Gilovich 2012).

Research relating to PO has not considered how the changing use of possessions might change the nature of our relationship with organisational targets. If self is being anchored by digital services showcasing our lives, does this have an impact on the connections we have with our job role or

organisation? For example, will individuals want certain job roles or be attached to certain organisations because of their online profile? Whilst this may not be a concern for all individuals, those at the start of their career, mainly millennials or generation Z are net natives and have grown up in a digital world with far more of their possessions being further along the liquidity spectrum than previous generations. Traditional ownership rites of passage regarding cars and homes may be delayed or may not occur at all with “shared ownership” for this group becoming increasingly important.

Moreover, given the posited ephemerality, is it possible that the strength of attachments to PO targets within the organisation may differ for this sample group as their relationships with targets are built on greater fluidity.

PO research has not yet considered these possible implications; therefore this could be a key area of future research.

2.12 Psychological Ownership Outcomes

PO is suggested to have several positive outcomes/effects related to both the organisation and the individual, hence why it has become a topic of interest for scholars.

Due to the pleasure producing elements of PO, individual outcomes relate particularly to job satisfaction, self-esteem, affective commitment, in-role performance, pro-active work behaviour, joy and job engagement (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Mayhew et al. 2007; Avey et al. 2009; Avey et al. 2012; Knapp et al. 2014; Peng and Pierce 2015; Wang et al. 2018; Zhang 2020; Henssen and Koiranen 2021).

Positive organisational outcomes include organisational commitment, organisational citizenship behaviour, work engagement, intentions to stay and stewardship (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; O' Driscoll et al. 2006; Mayhew et al. 2007; Avey et al. 2009; Wang et al. 2018; Zhang 2020).

One area touched on in consumer PO is feelings of pride in this instance for items individuals own (Di Muro and Noseworthy 2013; Kirk et al. 2015; Ahuvia et al. 2018). Pride is suggested to be a two faceted emotional response often activated by personal evaluations and reflections of self (Tracy and Robins

2007; Carver et al. 2010). Authentic pride is most positive form often relating to achievements and self-worth, whereas hubristic pride, which can still be authentic relates to our perceptions related to being superior to others (Tracy and Robins 2007; Carver et al. 2010; Kirk et al. 2015). This demonstrates the dual faceted nature of pride as on the one hand we can be proud of our achievements, yet there are negative connotations related to "pride before a fall". Within the consumer behaviour and PO literature pride (Kirk et al. 2015; Ahuvia et al. 2018) relates closely to identity which given identities close links to PO therefore makes it surprising that it has not been considered more in the organisational PO literature.

Henssen et al's (2014; 2021) studies of CEOs of family-owned businesses, suggested the joy of ownership. Whilst a very different level of participant, this is one of the few studies that have indicated the pleasure producing side of PO first mentioned by Pierce et al. (2001).

There are also negative outcomes of PO which will be discussed further in the following section.

2.13 Shadow side of Psychological Ownership

There have been significantly fewer studies regarding the negative side of PO, with most research focussing on the notion of territoriality.

Early PO research (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) alluded to possible negative implications for those individuals with high levels of PO in particular. They posit that there may be a mix of conditions that result in some individuals developing negative feelings some related to the organisational context and in particular unwanted change and some related to individual personality types such as those who need to feel high levels of control. The sort of "shadow" side behaviours suggested including individual outcomes such as sense of burden, personal sacrifice, job strain, alienation, burnout, and frustration along with deviant and territorial behaviours such as knowledge withholding (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Avey et al. 2009; Pierce et al. 2009b; Brown et al. 2014b; Peng and Pierce 2015; Dawkins et al. 2017; Cocieru et al. 2019c; Zhang 2020; Henssen and Koiranen 2021). Whilst the burden of PO has been mentioned occasionally, only Pierce et al. (2009b)

have provided more of an overview of this weight of responsibility suggesting it may be a means of protecting their identity and sense of self.

A series of studies have investigated the relationship between territoriality and PO (Avey et al. 2009; Brown 2009; Graham and Sandra 2011; Brown et al. 2014a; Brown and Zhu 2016). Brown et al. (2005a) argue that territoriality is a behavioural outcome to a target that an individual feels attached to. These feelings warrant an individual to claim, maintain, signal, and defend said target in a similar way that an animal may mark out and defend its territory. If individuals feel PO for a target, they may engage in marking behaviours such as identity or control orientated behaviours which allows an individual to communicate what they believe is “theirs”, for example, individuals in the workplace may personalise their desk or add their names to stationery items. Furthermore, fear of infringement of said targets may result in anticipatory or reactionary defences such as locking the door to your office or glaring at someone should they breach the boundary of your territory (Brown et al. 2005a; Brown 2009).

Marking and defensive behaviour has both positive and negative implications for individuals and their organisations. Whilst territoriality can mediate the relationship between turnover intentions and PO (Lu et al. 2017), facilitate organisational commitment and reduce workplace conflict, it may also make those individuals who are perceived to engage in territorial behaviour more isolated from colleagues or they become preoccupied with marking their territory and thus lose focus (Brown et al. 2005a). Team members are more inclined to negatively judge them (Brown et al. 2014b), believe they have less power in the workplace or consider them poorer performers (Brown and Zhu 2016). In addition, whilst those individuals with high levels of PO who work in high trust environments are less likely to engage in territorial behaviour. If they do, they are more likely to be self-serving and their colleagues may underestimate their team contributions.

Other studies have noted the duality of PO ascertaining that whilst knowledge-based PO when moderated by territoriality was likely to cause knowledge hiding, organisational based PO reduced the effect and therefore individuals with strong feelings for their company were less likely to knowledge hide (Peng

2013). Moreover (Wang et al. 2018) suggested that whilst job-related PO mediated the relationship between job engagement and OCB's, those with high levels of avoidance motivation were also likely to engage in negative implications such as pro job unethical behaviour, knowledge hiding and territorial behaviour. Finally Dai et al. (2021) study of hotel workers ascertained that promotion and prevention regulatory focus can reduce job burnout, although for individuals with low levels of PO, promotion focus is more likely to reduce job burnout than prevention focus.

Zhang (2020) meta-analysis of PO research along with Dawkins et al. (2017) PO review both call for further work to be undertaken regarding the shadow side of PO suggesting that areas such as stress and burnout warrant further investigation. They posit that those individuals who feel high levels of ownership may invest too much of themselves into the target which may result in feelings of anxiety or stress.

Given there has been no research work undertaken regarding the shadow side of PO in individuals at the start of their career or on fixed term contracts, there is a gap in our PO knowledge which this study aims to fill.

2.14 Demise of Psychological Ownership

Pierce et al. (2003) initially suggested that PO can disappear via a decoupling process like possession divestment rituals. The reasons for the disappearance of feelings may be due to a variety of factors such as changes to PO routes including loss of control within a job role; target characteristics changing e.g., a new organisational strategy or targets becoming less visible and malleable. They also posit that those from short term orientation cultures will find it easier to decouple than for those individuals with longer term orientations.

As this area has not yet gained interest from other scholars, there is a lack of empirical research to concur, although it does seem likely that PO will follow a similar trajectory to theories of PAO. Given the costs involved in employee turnover, a more nuanced understanding of this area is important generally. This study will not assess this area in detail, however given the participants have fixed term contracts, divestment rituals may be identified.

2.15 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed theories relating to psychological ownership and its conceptual core theories of possession and ownership thus providing an understanding of how PO was conceived and developed. Figure one demonstrates this overview:

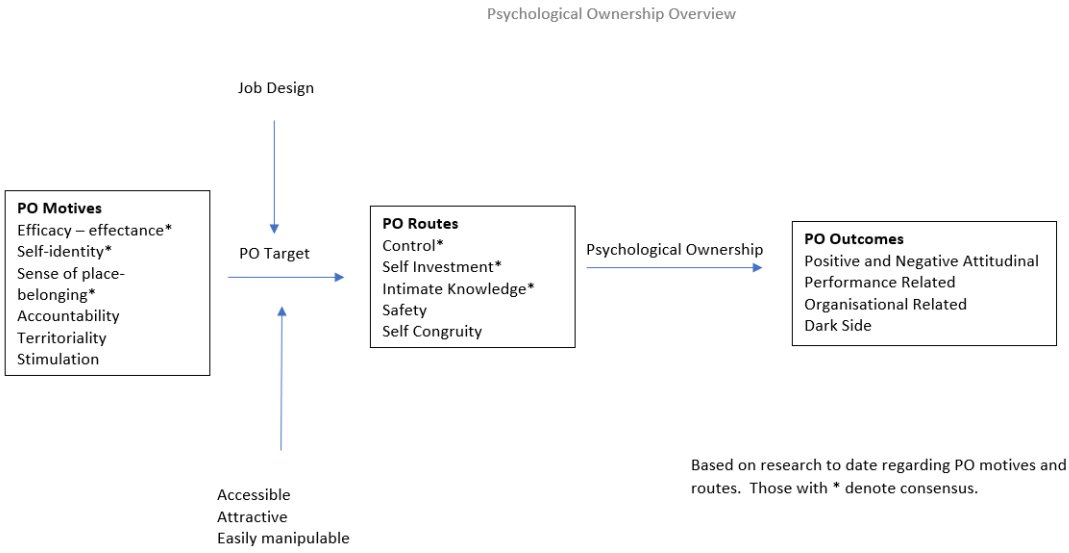

Figure One: Psychological Ownership Overview

Nevertheless, whilst the development of PO and its related antecedents have been researched in some detail, research to date has concentrated on experienced workers who have spent some time in the workplace, leaving a large gap in our knowledge regarding how PO might actually develop in individuals at the start of their career.

It seems clear that the self and material / immaterial targets are closely entwinned providing a continuing journey between who we are, who we want to be and how we wish to be seen. The strongest attachments signify who we are, changing status from being “mine” to being part of “me” (Belk 1988; Ferraro et al. 2011) or in the case of collective PO to being part of “us”. These

links to our identities seem particularly pertinent for those individuals experiencing liminality and being “betwixt and between” student and professional identities (Turner 2011) . With possible and future selves on the horizon emergent identities are socially constructed via an interplay of rituals, role modelling and experimentation (Beech 2011; Holmes 2015). Yet can attachments form in individuals who are working in a particular job role within a particular organisation for a short period of time? This is not entirely clear and so this study will consider not only if PO can be developed in this group of WPS, but also if there is evidence of strong attachments.

For our possessions to become part of our extended self, some psychic investment is required which often comes in the form of possession rituals such as creating, controlling, caring, contaminating, knowing, using, mastering, or buying items (Sartre 1956; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Belk 1988; Ahuvia 2005; Mittal 2006; Watkins et al. 2015). Control of objects and targets seem to play an important part in this process, and we have a stronger connection to items which we choose and which we believe link with notions that we value.

This psychic investment has been translated into PO routes in the PO literature with control and investing self heralded as key routes and intimate knowledge of the target being the three widely posited routes. Zhang (2020) and Morewedge et al. (2021) have expanded the list of routes to include safety (which consists of organisational justice, trust, perceived organisational support and relational closeness) and self-congruity, although given these are recent addition, there has not been further discussion amongst scholars. Trust has been considered to play a part in developing feelings of ownership (Brown et al. 2014b; Olckers and Enslin 2016a), although other elements have not been considered in more detail by theorists.

Pierce et al. (2003) suggested that whilst all individuals may be able to develop feelings of ownership for organisational targets, these may emerge at different times and in different ways being heavily influenced by situational factors. PO emergence is complex and suggest that whilst at the cognitive level individuals might make quick attachments, to feel full ownership may be a long reiterative process. However, this has not been fully explained and no other scholars

have examined this area in more detail, nor explained PO's demise or regrowth. If we consider our relationship with possessions, it is true that some of our most treasured possessions have been with us for some time and their story entwines with our own. But there are also possessions which instantly become important to us either because they were given to us by someone special, they were self-made, or we can see someone physic energy. Therefore, both control and investing self may provide us with opportunities to quickly feel attachment. Only coming to intimately know the target really requires an investment of time.

Thoughtful Job design by organisations allows individuals more opportunities to control and adapt their job roles and thus has been heralded as a means by which organisations can facilitate opportunities for individuals to develop job-related PO (Pierce et al. 2009a; Peng and Pierce 2015) via a top-down approach. However, if we consider two of the PO motives investing self in target and intimate knowledge of the target, these are also partly controlled by the incumbent, in a bottom-up form of job designed which is more closely aligned to job crafting. Therefore, is job-related PO influenced by job crafting as well as job design?

Whilst investing self in target and job crafting could be seen to have similarities, one is about making the job role "mine", whilst the other is about changing the boundaries of the job role to provide greater job satisfaction. Job crafting allows individuals greater control and opportunities to invest self which are key routes to developing ownership and therefore could be more important in the development of PO than job design. This study allows us to consider perceived examples of job and career crafting and its possible impact on Job-related PO and the rituals undertaken to develop it.

Pierce et al. (2003) posited that possession rituals facilitate the development of PO and whilst this area is often referred to in the literature relating to possessions, it has been overlooked in the discussion regarding PO emergence and development. Given the suggestion that intense sense making helps border hoping into a professional self, rituals may be particularly key to facilitating PO in early career professionals. As this group of

participants are working on short term contracts, divestment rituals also seem likely to occur.

Moreover, our relationships with possessions are changing from a physical, tangible items to those which may be digital, shared or access based. There is growing evidence to suggest that we may have a liquid relationship with possessions (Bardhi et al. 2012; Masset and Decrop 2016). Research suggests that despite initial concerns that these items were less likely to become part of the extended self, digital items in particular are still considered meaningful providing powerful anchors to our extended self (Belk 2013; Molesworth et al. 2016). Sites such as Facebook, Instagram and iTunes mean that we no longer own items yet still having feelings of attachment via our creations (pictures, news, timelines etc). Those born at the start of this century may have a very different view of ownership as they are more likely to share ownership (Facebook, iTunes) and rent/subscribe rather than buy (Netflix).

Furthermore, as liquid consumption brings ephemerality, access-based consumption, and dematerialisation (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) will this mean that younger millennials and generation Z have less certainty in their lives resulting in posited short term transactional relationships with possessions (Bardhi and Eckhardt 2017) which could follow through to their careers. Within this research should we expect individuals to consider their careers as Protean careers or to career craft? PO research has not considered the implications of our changing relationship with possessions and how this may affect individual's ability to form attachments to organisational targets which this study will consider in more detail.

Most of the above suggests that what is missing from PO research is more granulated detail regarding PO development especially at the start of an individual's career. As observed in section 2.5, early conceptualisation (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) provided a myriad of potential areas for scholars to research, question and develop (including boundary conditions, target attributes, personality, personal values and cross-cultural contexts) yet research outputs have been focussed in certain areas such as antecedents and its links to other organisations constructs. If we look at the PO research landscape there is uneven coverage and whilst it is natural that

some areas take precedence over others, given PO conceptualisation is over twenty years of age this limited investment in certain areas is ultimately affecting the application of this concept in the workplace.

This may be partly due to studies regarding Organisational PO traditionally being framed by a positivist perspective. Dawkins et al. (2017) review of PO highlighted the need for refinement of both the conceptualisation and measurement of PO, yet some years later, many of these concerns remain.

Moreover, given the reliance on the survey method with the resultant PO measurement ambiguity I would suggest that PO is at a methodological junction that would benefit from utilising alternative methods when developing and substantiating current claims. By exploring lived experiences concerning the minutiae of PO, this study will have the opportunity to examine more closely the undoubted complexities of the concept provoking further discussion between theorists along with a more intricate tapestry of PO manifestation and development.

Finally, PO has been linked to positive and negative outcomes for both the individual and the organisation. Research has tended to veer towards positive outcomes, although there has been more recent interest in negative outcomes in particular territoriality. This study will consider both positive and negative implications of job-related PO.

To conclude, the above section has provided an overview of PO research demonstrating its close links to theories of possession and ownership, but also its divergences as well as areas that require further investigation.

The following chapter outlines the research methodology of this study, before reviewing the results of this qualitative study.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodological approach undertaken for this study concerning the development of PO in early career professionals. As you may recall, the predominant perspective in PO (Psychological Ownership) research to date has been a positivist stance, with the survey method being the dominant method utilised. As research to date has neglected the social element of PO, concerning how individuals, managers, and colleagues construct PO together, there is an opportunity to broaden PO methodological perspectives. Therefore, this study will approach PO differently, to provide the opportunity to add colour and richness, breadth and depth to causal relationships, providing a multidimensional perspective regarding why individuals might have the propensity to develop PO.

This chapter will outline the philosophical assumptions of the researcher in terms of what they believe is the nature of reality (ontology), epistemology or *"how we know what we know" Crotty (1998, p.3),* and values (axiology), before aligning these to the researcher's theoretical perspective and methodology. All of these inform the method utilised in this study, providing the opportunity to understand the lived experiences of PO development in individuals who have just entered the workplace.

Table one on the following page highlights the researcher's own philosophical assumptions, theoretical perspective and research approach:

Philosophical assumptions / Theoretical perspective /Methods	Researcher Assumptions-Perspectives-Methods
Ontology	Multiple realities
Epistemology	Constructionist
Axiology	Value-laden and Co-constructed
Paradigm	Interpretive
Methodology/Research Method	Qualitative/ Semi-structured interviews
Thematic Analysis Approach	Reflexive Thematic Analysis

Table One: Researcher's philosophical assumptions - theoretical perspective and methods

3.2 Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

As stated in the introduction chapter, the aim of this study is to explore the development of work-related PO in individuals at the start of their career, using a sample of work placement students from a post-1992 university.

3.2.1 Objectives

1) To explore the formation of work-related psychological ownership in individuals at the start of their career.
5. To uncover the positive and negative outcomes suggested from the participant's experience of job-related psychological ownership.
2) To identify areas where qualitative research can add value to Psychological Ownership studies.
3) To provide a framework for how PO may be utilised and developed by organisations and their key stakeholders (e.g., line managers, HR).

3.2.2 Research Questions

1. How might psychological ownership of work-related targets be constructed by individuals at the start of their career?
2. What factors seem to influence the development of work-related psychological ownership targets in this specific group of individuals?
3. What do these individuals, line managers and Placement Development Advisors perceive to be the potential outcomes (both positive and negative) of developing job-related psychological ownership at the start of a career?
4. How might qualitative studies benefit our understanding of psychological ownership?

3.3 Philosophical Assumptions

According to Creswell and Poth (2018) it can be important to understand how our philosophical assumptions influence the research process that we choose to follow. Individuals often make assumptions in the following areas:

Ontology considered to be the study of what exists and the things that exist (Lawson et al. 2007) or what we consider to be reality (Creswell and Poth 2018). This researcher considers that multiple realities exist amongst individuals and that this array of perspectives and differences is important to be recognised, especially within their own context (Braun and Clarke 2013; Creswell and Poth 2018). This differs from those who believe there is one objective truth, an identifiable reality or that this notion of reality exists on behalf of those in power (critical) (Denzin and Lincoln 2018).

Epistemology is “the theory of knowledge” Crotty (1998, p.3) allowing individuals to ascertain, understand and justify their beliefs about their knowledge – and what counts to us as knowledge. Whilst Crotty (1998) suggests there are a number of epistemological perspectives, he proposes three as the most frequently used: objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism.

Objectivism which is closely aligned to a positivist theoretical perspective suggesting a clear separation between meaning and meaningful reality and "belief in total objectivity" (Denzin and Lincoln 2018).

A second widely used form of epistemology according to Crotty (1998) is subjectivism in which a perspective is impressed on a subject/object without any interaction. This is not a world view that the researcher subscribes to however, as they believe that knowledge develops via an interplay between the researcher and subject.

Constructionism suggests that there is not one form of knowledge and therefore that our meaning-making does not rely on one truth, but many different truths depending on how they have been constructed. Via our engagements with others, be they people or objects, knowledge is constructed, and therefore those with this perspective appreciate different ways individuals construct their meanings and reality (Crotty 1998). This is the belief most closely aligned to the researcher. For example, by completing interviews with individuals at the start of their career, and by asking them questions regarding their experiences of the workplace, a researcher can appreciate how they have built their perspective of the workplace whilst still understanding that people can experience the same phenomenon and perceive it in very different ways. For example, individuals in the same department may attend the same meeting but construct totally different perspectives regarding the tone and the intent of that meeting. We are aware of these differences in humans and so it seems appropriate to try to understand what some of these differences about a phenomenon might be. Real life is messy (Shaw et al. 2008; Braun and Clarke 2013), but there is a joy in considering how individuals construct perspectives on different phenomena and by sharing some of their stories, their reality of multifaceted concepts can be highlighted.

Finally, **axiology** relates to the role of values in our research. As someone who suggests that knowledge is constructed, the researcher also acknowledges that meaning may involve the researcher's own values in their interpretation and so therefore needs to be aware of their own role in this research. The researcher subscribes to the perspective of Braun and Clarke (2019) centring researcher subjectivity as part of the reflexive thematic process

and applying transparency around the process, rather than suggesting that any individual can be fully objective. Reality is co-constructed between researcher and participants, highlighting the multiple perspectives that can exist regarding any phenomenon (Creswell and Poth 2018). This subject will be considered further in the reflectivity and data analysis sections.

3.4 Theoretical Perspective

Leading on from a researcher's philosophical assumptions, Crotty (1998) suggests the researcher's theoretical perspectives inform the methodology used within a study. Other researchers, such as Creswell and Poth (2018) include these interpretive frameworks as part of the philosophical assumption section or paradigms (Denzin and Lincoln 2013), which this researcher concurs with.

This study has adopted an interpretive paradigm acknowledging the role of the researcher within the study who wishes to understand and interpret individuals' experiences of psychological ownership. By interpreting individual and group meaning within specific contexts there is the opportunity to build knowledge regarding how individuals construct meaning at a particular point in time. There is an acknowledgement that truth differs between people and over time (Braun and Clarke 2013).

Other theoretical perspectives include positivism and post-positivism, relating to traditional scientific methods used by those who believe there is a logical and objective truth (Braun and Clarke 2013; Creswell and Poth 2018), critical inquiry, feminism, and post-modernism (Crotty 1998).

3.5 Methodology: Qualitative Approach/Research Methods

This study provides us with an opportunity to engage with the lived experiences of early career professionals and see the factors that may strengthen / inhibit PO development in this particular context and understand how it affects these individuals' working lives. Maxwell (2012 cited by Mertens 2017 p237-8), suggests that qualitative research allows individuals to add processes, differences and structure to causal relationships, sometimes termed as "the meat around the bone", allowing us to see how individuals'

experiences differ, whilst still sharing some similar characteristics. Meaning making is often formed with others, be it from their upbringing and early socialisation to the cultural norms that influence how we live and work. In the context of this study, the researcher believes that these early career professionals are joining an organisation with their own individual history of work beliefs and attitudes (shaped and influenced by family and friends' perceptions of work, experiences within part time work and general career-related rhetoric, which lecturers, placement staff and the media frame around their lives). Qualitative research allows us access some of these many individual realities, allowing us to co-create knowledge with them in their specific context (Braun and Clarke 2013; Creswell and Poth 2018).

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) use the analogies of a miner and a traveller to link interviews and epistemology with the miner representing a positivist approach of seeking gold or truth, whereas the traveller in a new country will ask questions and seek out stories to build knowledge, thus entwinning information and analysis to construct a sense of place. The traveller may have some existing knowledge of a country at the start of their journey, but like interpretivist researchers, it is through interactions with others that knowledge and analysis entwine, are developed, sometimes providing the unexpected.

Interviews have been described as "professional conversations" with "structure and purpose" (Kvale 2007, p.14; Brinkmann and Kvale 2015, p.3) that try to ascertain meaning and perspectives on a particular topic. Semi-structured interviews are the most dominant form of interview (Braun and Clarke 2013), although Miller and Glassner (2011), in Silverman (2011), suggest that some are wary of the likelihood of it truly capturing the social world. Whilst an interview may not mirror our social world, it does provide opportunities to collect meaning, knowledge, and perceptions.

Interviews are best used for the exploration of "understandings, perceptions and constructions of things that participants have a personal stake in" (Braun and Clarke 2013, p.81) and therefore fit well with the topic of PO. This will be discussed further in section 3.8.4

Other research methods were considered. Ethnography in its initial form using direct observation (Silverman 2011) was considered because of the chance to

observe individuals in their natural environment and the daily rituals that become part of their working life. This was rejected for two reasons; the main reason being that this was the participants' first job role and to be watched by an academic from their university might have been unnerving with an uneven power dynamic. Secondly, many junior business roles consist of work which is mainly online and, in some companies, working from home was the norm, thus limiting occasions to observe the social construction of PO. Nevertheless, organisational ethnography may be a suitable method to use in the future, with a different research population, and using organisations where there is greater social interaction, such as hospitality, retail, and healthcare.

3.6 Data Collection

The data collection process used in this study will be discussed in more detail below. However figure two below provides a timeline of the data collection and analysis:

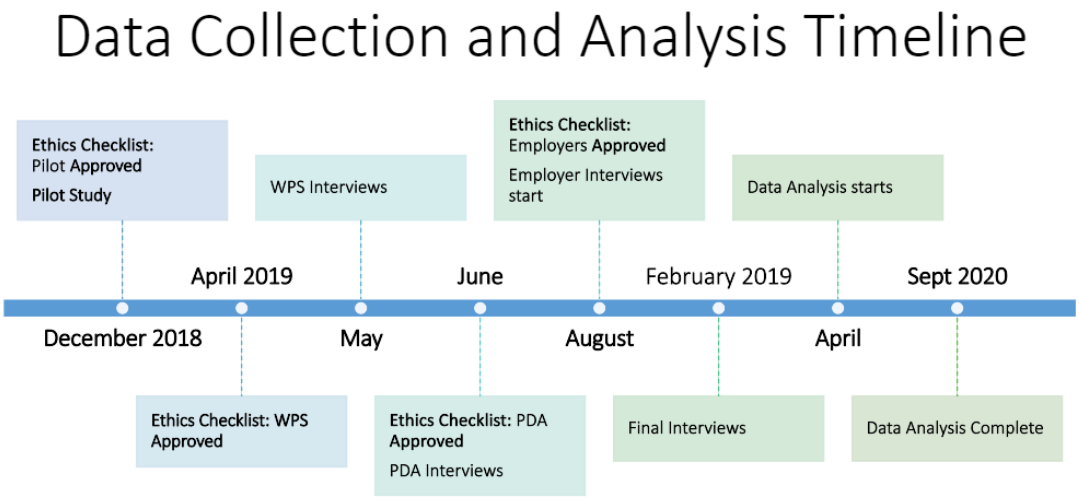

Figure Two: Data Collection and Analysis Timeline

The following sections describe the data collection process for this study including data sampling, sample composition, the data collection process of interviews and finally triangulation.

3.6.1 Data Sampling

Sampling is often contested within qualitative research with Emmel (2013) suggesting that it is not useful terminology, whilst other debates concern sample size numbers and the notion of saturation (Patton 2002; Braun and Clarke 2021c; Staller 2021). Some of these debates seem to refer in part to epistemology and how the overriding perception of objectivity and positivism still skew the perspectives of qualitative researchers.

Purposeful sampling is suggested to be a strong element of qualitative research, as researchers are purposefully looking for certain individuals to participate in research, rather than trying to eliminate bias (Patton 2002). Information richness is the desired outcome, rather than a desire for objectivity and generalisations. In this study, a large sample of individuals with different levels of work experience would not help discover how PO might develop at the start of a career and so, the decision was made to focus on a particular group of individuals in the workplace.

As referred to previously, some researchers may suggest the first graduate job as the pertinent time to undertake research into early careers. However, working in a post-92 university where work placements are the norm, and having insider knowledge of the impact of work placements on individuals, this felt a more significant place to ascertain how PO might develop in individuals (further discussion on page 83). As with all studies, there are limitations, and these will be discussed in S3.8.3. A strategy of purposeful sampling utilising maximum variation and intensity sampling was desired within this particular university population.

Maximum variation purposeful sampling tries to provide a range of different participant perspectives, whereas purposeful intensity sampling offers strong examples (Staller 2021). Palinkas et al. (2013) suggests that combining forms of purposeful sampling can be beneficial if it fits with the aims of the study. This study wishes to explore the formation of work-related PO and therefore the researcher wishes to see a range of perspectives, including those of participants who are towards the extremes of this participant group, where experiences might be quite different (Patton 2002). The researcher therefore

chose to utilise a purposeful sample combining both maximum and intensity variation of WPS participants. This was felt to be achieved by the completion of participant WPS 19, although as an additional participant had already been scheduled, it felt pertinent to complete this interview as well

3.6.2 Sample Composition

Sample sizes for qualitative studies have been debated with Patton (2002) suggesting there are no rules and Creswell (2015) stating that often qualitative research sampling takes a random form, as researchers have a prior idea in their mind regarding the sample size, which they stick to throughout the research. Often the sample size is related to saturation, which is suggested to be the point where no new information is yielded or there is information redundancy (Lincoln et al. 1985). This point is disputed by Braun and Clarke (2021c) for use in thematic analysis (TA) and reflexive TA, arguing that reflexive thematic analysis (TA) differs from coding reliability and codebook TA in part because of its "messy", organic form. They suggest that the move to defining saturation in one's sample (be it 12 interviews (Guest et al. 2006); 9 interviews (Eynon et al. 2018) or 7 interviews, as suggested by Constantinou et al. (2017) may have been a well-intentioned form of proposing validity in qualitative research and a pragmatic approach to funding requirements (Sim et al. 2018). Yet by focussing on such a form of validity does not take account of the different forms of TA and if saturation is thereby an effective form of validation. Sample size debates in qualitative studies seem to occur regularly with proposals of solutions (Fugard and Potts 2015) or questioning current practices (Sim et al. 2018). Debates are spirited, yet there is no congruence, with a mixture of ontology, pragmatism, and rules of thumb (Blaikie 2018; Sim et al. 2018; Braun and Clarke 2021c). Emmel (2013) suggests that asking about sample size is asking the wrong question, which Guetterman (2015) concurs with, suggesting "how" and "why" might be stronger approaches.

In addition to the WPS, triangulation was desired to provide different perspectives regarding the experience of workplace PO. Therefore, three participant types; Work Placement Students, employers and Placement Development Advisors, were interviewed, providing an opportunity to see ways

in which PO might be constructed at the early stages of a career from a variety of different perspectives.

Whilst the PDA may be an outsider to the organisation of the WPS or employer, their role situates them within the placement experience through their structured meetings with the WPS / employer and through providing on-placement support. In addition, they all had experience of working with several cohorts and could see the patterns that emerge in ECPs.

One of the study limitations is the lack of employers willing to participate in the study. Those WPS who were interviewed asked their supervisors if they would be willing to be interviewed and the researcher sent an email follow up to five employers who expressed an interest, but only three employers agreed to be interviewed. This will be further discussed in the limitations section, but does demonstrate the challenges faced by researchers accessing some participants.

Tables two and three show the composition of the sample of participants in this study in more detail. The main participants are the WPS, due to the desire to ascertain how PO develops in early career professionals. However employers and PDAs were also included to provide different perspectives of the construct:

- Work Placement Students (WPS) – 20 participants from 15 different organisations
- Placement Development Advisors (PDA) – 3 participants
- Employers (E)– 4 participants at 3 organisations.

The university participants involved in this study comprise few international students and consist mainly of white students, and so neither ethnic diversity nor nationality are included in the table. Whilst there is maximum variation of sampling within the study in terms of gender, different organisation types and different job roles, it must be acknowledged that one of the limitations of the study is the lack of racial diversity (this will be discussed further in the limitations section). The decision was taken not to include race or nationality in the table, as those participants might be immediately recognised and so for

confidentiality reasons this has not been included. Two students identified their Additional Learning Needs during the interviews and this information has also not been categorised in the demographic information for similar reasons to those above. As Dodgson (2019) suggests, we need to be transparent about the context of the participants, including demographics, power relationships and our responses to participant. Therefore, it is important to be clear that this samples are not representative of university students in the UK and because of the level of their education, it is not representative of all early career professionals. Rather this study provides an in-depth snapshot of a particular group of individuals during a particular time period.

As highlighted, a purposeful maximum variation and intensity sampling was employed. The researcher continued her interviews over a second academic year to try and build the maximum variation in the WPS participants with some success. Intensity sampling was successful across the range of participants. It was challenging to find employer participants, with the majority of employers stating that they were too busy to be interviewed. Nevertheless, even within these participants there is a variation and intensity to provide the required complexity and richness of data, and so a pragmatic decision was taken given they were not the main focus of the study.

The employer participants worked in the South of England for a large technology company, a small Finance house and a University. Three participants were female, one male and all were white. Two participants were relatively senior in their organisation, whilst two would be considered middle management. All had worked at their organisation for at least six years. The PDAs consisted of two female and one male participant, two born in the UK and one overseas. The researcher had worked in the same department as one long-established PDA, but had little prior knowledge of the others. Prior to the interviews, whilst the researcher was excited, as this quote demonstrates there were also some nerves:

> *"These are different types of participants and I am using different questions and so have that initial anxiety about starting again. I am completing all three interviews on the one day almost back to back and am quite excited about what they will have to say. I used to work with one of the*

participants, but do not know the others particularly well, so I am sure there will be a different dynamic."

Researcher thoughts prior to PDA interviews

However, the concerns proved to be unfounded and the interviews proved to be helpful to triangulate some on the perspectives of the WPS and employers.

Participant Number (1-10)	**Gender**	**Course**		**Participant Number (11-20)**	**Gender**	**Course**
P1	M	Business Studies		**P11**	F	Business Studies
P2	M	Business Studies		**P12**	F	Business Studies
P3	F	Comms & Media		**P13**	M	Business Studies
P4	M	Comms & Media		**P14**	F	Business Studies
P5	M	Business Studies		**P15**	M	Marketing
P6	M	Business Studies		**P16**	F	Business Studies
P7	F	Business Studies		**P17**	M	Accounting & Finance
P8	F	Business Studies		**P18**	F	Business Studies
P9	M	Business Studies		**P19**	M	Business Studies
P10	F	Business Studies		**P20**	M	Business Studies

Table Two: WPS Participants

Participant	Gender	Organisational Sector	Role Area
E1a	F	Education	Project Management
E1b	F	Education	Project Management
E2	F	Technology	Recruitment & Engagement Lead
E3	M	Finance	Director
PDA1	F	Cover all sectors	Placement Support
PDA2	M		Placement Support
PDA3	F		Placement Support

Table Three: Employer and PDA Participants

3.6.3 Data Collection Process

The WPS were contacted via an email asking them to participate in a study on psychological ownership and all those who replied were offered an opportunity to be interviewed. The PDAs relating to these courses were also approached and agreed to be interviewed. As mentioned previously, it was more challenging accessing employers and only four employers from three different organisations agreed to be interviewed. As discussed above, there were variety and intensity within the employer sample which did allow for a range of perspectives. The result of which was the data collection took longer than expected, starting the pilot in December 2018, with completion of all interviews by February 2020.

3.6.4 Interviews

Interviews are suggested to be a craft by Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) which requires learning best practice. Whilst the researcher has been a recruiter in a previous job role and so has experience of drawing information from individuals in a formal setting, prior research regarding research interviews was invaluable.

Interviews are often categorised in three forms:

- Structured interviews, in which pre-determined questions are set by the researcher.
- Semi-structured interviews, in which there are pre-determined questions, but there is flexibility for the researcher to ask other questions, if the participant raises an unanticipated point.
- Unstructured interviews, where the direction of the interview is led by the participant, although the researcher may steer the interview at times to cover key themes.

As mentioned previously, semi-structured interviews were chosen for their rigor and their flexibility. The researcher based their interviews around responsive interviewing Rubin and Rubin (2004) , due to the flexibility of the process in which steps within the process are not fixed.

An interview guide was developed in the suggested brainstorming fashion (Smith et al. 1995). The questions were then considered against the research questions, with questions grouped with potential follow-up questions, and special attention paid to phrasing and opening and closing questions. The questions were then tested via a pilot with a WPS who had recently completed their placement and was about to enter their final year of studies. One of the key benefits of a pilot study is to assess your research methods and make adjustments where required (Morse 2015) and this proved to be effective when assessing the interview schedule. The pilot confirmed that the broad open-ended questions were effective, but resulted in some adjustments, mainly relating to the inclusion of follow-up questions to ensure greater depth of answers, and to ensure the researcher didn't miss any key areas (appendix 3). The results in this pilot study were not included in the final study, as on reflection it was clear that this pilot lacked depth in comparison to later

interviews. It was however beneficial in ensuring a more robust interview schedule.

Constantinou et al. (2017) suggest that qualitative research can be deductive as well as inductive. Whilst this study demonstrates a far greater degree of induction, by asking broad semi-structured questions, which allow the interviewee's responses to emerge, such as "Tell me about your job role", there were also questions which implied a level of deduction involved such as "As you know my study is about psychological ownership. What does ownership in the workplace mean to you?"

Because the researcher has completed a literature review on the topic before the interview schedule was compiled, there is prior knowledge and beliefs about the topic, which should be acknowledged by the author (Braun and Clarke 2021c). These include knowledge regarding PO motives and routes. There are also prior beliefs that need to be acknowledged, related to feelings that there were gaps in the literature regarding the overall conception of PO development, particularly in early career professionals. Whilst the researcher did not have beliefs about what this missing information might be, they felt that the role of others in PO construction may have been underplayed (other than in discussing leadership). The researcher also believed that PO might have manifested itself in individuals prior to the start of their placement, hence question 12 in the interview schedule (appendix 4). Nonetheless, whilst the researcher had completed a literature review in advance, because previous research has predominantly used a positivist approach, the researcher was able to develop mainly broad questions to ascertain the lived experience of psychological ownership with the intention of hearing participant's individual stories. In particular, the "what" and "how" questions regarding PO development fell into this category?.

Interview schedules were also adapted for both the Employer questions and the PDA questions (appendix 5 and 6). In both instances, the questions were like those of the WPS and tended to be broad in nature initially, before narrowing down specifically to questions about PO.

Participants were interviewed in a location of their choice, be it their workplace, the university or, if a great distance was involved, online. Those who were

interviewed online were used to using workplace technology (even before the Pandemic) and as you can see from the extract below from the researcher's journal, whilst there were some initial concerns about including online interviews, there were many very positive experiences:

> *"This was my first Skype interview and so I was concerned beforehand, if it would record properly and if it would be as personal. I didn't need to worry however as both elements worked well. In fact in many ways this interview felt more personal."* Researcher

Nonetheless, for all interviews this is an unnatural setting, in which some participants may exaggerate claims or make statements to please or satisfy what they believe the interviewer was looking to hear, rather than giving an accurate overview. Some of these interviews could be defined as "acquaintance interviews" (Garton and Copland 2010) in which there is some prior relationship. The researcher taught some of the students, although they were part of a large cohort (P1, 2, 5, 6,7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, and 20) of 300 students and so the degree of prior relationship with the majority was quite limited. The researcher did have further interaction with P7, 9, and 14, who had been Seminar Reps. The researcher had taught P15 in a smaller cohort, but had not taught or met P3, 4 or 17 in advance of the interviews. The researcher has considered the question of "acquaintance interviews" in some detail, to see the effect, but feels that in this study there was very little difference on the whole between acquaintances and "interviewing strangers" (Braun and Clarke 2013). What feels more pertinent was participants' self-confidence and chattiness. So, P 1,3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17 were very talkative. In fact, P4, with whom the researcher had had little previous interaction with, talked continuously, whilst P6, 8, 14 and 16 were more challenging. Below is an extract from the researcher journal regarding P16:

> *"This participant was very nervous and fidgety - I don't feel I did enough to relax her in the first instance. When doing Skype interviews, must remember to take the time to do this first of all. I was tired and that may have come across"* Researcher

This experience was unusual, as Skype interviews had been successful to this point and the researcher had interviewed a lot of participants (both face to face and online). It demonstrates the importance of settling your participants when opening interviews, to set the scene and make everyone comfortable. However, Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that even the most skilled interviewers can have bad days, and this unfortunately was one of them.

It must be acknowledged that there is a power dynamic in any interview with the researcher as an academic and interviewer had greater power. Therefore, it was the researcher's desire to make the participants feel comfortable. Some of this was completed in advance of the interview, by asking the participants to choose where they would be interviewed and by reminding them about confidentiality and research ethics. Then at the start of the interview, the researcher spent time on "small talk" and the first question which was an ice breaker question. Whilst part of the reason why P6, 8, 14 and 16 may have been less talkative may have been due to the power relationship, the researcher believes that it was mainly due to the artificial setting. Whilst some individuals are very comfortable talking about themselves, others may struggle, partly due to the unusual context, but as mentioned previously partly due to their own confidence.

The interviews with the PDAs and the employers all went smoothly, perhaps because they were interested parties and there was less of a power dynamic. One employer interview contained two participants which could have been a challenge. However, both were very respectful of each other's views and it was interesting to see the areas of agreement / disagreement and where they reminded each other of WPS involvement. Below is an example of this in the transcript for employer one:

E1a: "we would have been completely imbalanced, so unfortunately I explained to XXX why I couldn't involve her in the interviews"

E1b: "XXX did the questions though, didn't she?"

E1a: "Yeah. She was involved in everything except the interview".

All participants were sent an email after the interview to express gratitude and ask if there were any additional points that they wished to raise. No additional

information was forthcoming. Transcribing interviews proved slow, as the researcher was a part-time student, and it felt too late to send a follow up email with the interview transcript. There are positive and negative outcomes to sending out interview transcripts to participants. On the one hand, it gives the participant the opportunity to review the conversation and make any adjustments. However individuals can also be dismayed by their lack of fluency and/or want to make changes, which alter the data integrity (Hagens et al. 2009; Irit 2011). It is suggested that participants reviewing transcripts can present as many challenges as advantages.

3.6.5 Research Ethics

The university lays out an ethical code of conduct which the researcher followed, as well as regularly referring to other sources such as Creswell and Poth (2018) who provide an overview of ethical issues at each stage of the research process. Early University ethics approval was gained by submitting the ethics checklist (appendix 1), including a Participant Information sheet disclosing the nature of the study and implications relating to management of data and the Participant Agreement form (appendix 2) that are provided to participants prior to the start of the interview. There were different interview questions for the WPS, the PDA and the employers and so ethics checklists were submitted separately for each as denoted in the timeline (figure two). All participants were aware in advance that the interviews would be recorded. All participant agreement forms were signed and returned before the start of the interviews to ensure informed consent and participants given the opportunity to discuss any questions either by email or before the interview. No questions or concerns were raised. Whilst this study was deemed “low risk” by the University Research Ethics process, it was important to always be sensitive and aware that individuals are sharing what could be personal and sensitive information to them. Data protocols were followed regarding data storage and anonymising data such as names and organisations was important. Pseudonyms were used in the transcribed data, this thesis and other research publications.

As highlighted previously, information relating to nationality, ethnicity and additional learning needs have not been included because that might make participants identifiable.

Further information relating to the trustworthiness of research can be found in section 3.9.

3.6.6 Triangulation

There are suggested to be four forms of triangulation (Denzin 1978; Patton 1999), although this study used only one form: data source triangulation, in which participants from different groups were interviewed, in this case WPS, employer's and PDAs. Whilst in many instances triangulation is used to corroborate viewpoints to find a single truth, in this instance it was used to build a greater depth of understanding of PO from multiple perspectives (Braun and Clarke 2013). The PDAs have experience supporting many WPS during their placement year, helping them reflect and articulate their skill development, whilst the employers have experience of managing early career professionals. Therefore, both parties provide another perspective of PO, which may occasionally corroborate viewpoints with the WPS, but can also suggest alternative viewpoints which add to the richness of the data. As mentioned previously, the researcher struggled to engage further employers in the study which would have been ideal. Nevertheless, the intention was always to focus on the WPS participants and their experiences of PO.

3.7 Data Analysis

This study used reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2019, 2021a) to interpret the collected data. Thematic analysis (TA) is an umbrella term used for a broad range of approaches, techniques, or methods (Terry et al 2017), which allows for different philosophical assumptions. The commonality between all is the desire to make sense of patterns in data.

When considering data analysis, various approaches were deliberated. Template analysis (Brooks et al. 2015) was initially considered

due to its easy adaptation to different studies. However, one of the key features of template analysis is the use of “priori themes” which whilst perhaps providing some direction to the research, do undermine this study’s desire for a mainly inductive approach. Discourse and Conversation Analysis were also rejected, because, whilst knowledge is constructed especially within discourse analysis, its critical realist stance and its rigid coding and counting (Potter 2011) provide a very different philosophy to that of the researcher. Conversation analysis is more aligned to natural discourses within everyday life and therefore was not appropriate for an interview situation (Braun and Clarke 2013). Content analysis was rejected due to its focus on some of the more positivist perspectives towards data which can often involve coding data numerically Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2017 cited by Willig and Stainton-Rogers 2017).

Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013, 2014, 2016; 2017, 2018; 2019, 2021b) have written prolifically about thematic analysis, raising the profile of TA, but also helping to categorise various forms of TA. Kidder and Fine (1987) initial categorisation indicated two forms of TA: Big Q, whose basis is more inductive and interpretative, falling within a “qualitative paradigm” (Braun and Clarke 2021a, p.329), whereas Little Q relates to more “hypothetico-deductive research” Locke (2004, p.303) closer to a positivist paradigm. Due to the recent increase in popularity of TA, Braun and Clarke (2019) have sought to further develop these categories, suggesting three main typologies:

- Coding reliability TA, emphasising an objective/unbiased, very structured form of qualitative research often with an emphasis on deduction.
- Codebook TA, considered the broadest TA category with a qualitative paradigm and early theme identification.
- Reflexive TA, which relates to an interpretative reflexive approach where subjectivity and context are acknowledged as part of the process. Coding is more fluid and organic with themes actively created encapsulating numerous facets. Whilst this is a mainly inductive form of analytic process, it is recognised that it is almost impossible for researchers to come from a purely inductive stance as

they may have read literature on a topic and thus accept some level of deduction may have informed their research.

These typologies demonstrate the different perspectives towards TA, suggesting a broad umbrella term, where different epistemological stances result in very different ways of analysing qualitative data, albeit emphasising that all TA analysis involves seeing patterns. Reflexive TA was chosen however because of the clear links to interpretivism, where the researcher plays an active part in theme creation or via building interpretive stories. Themes in this instance are described as "themes as patterns of shared meaning, cohering around a central concept" (Braun and Clarke 2019, p.551) and have been compared to a sculptor actively shaping a block of marble. It is the researcher who shapes the themes, acknowledging their personal subjectivity, but seeing it as a resource, rather than a hinderance. Reflectivity is acknowledged as being a key engagement within data analysis and interpretation.

Whilst they suggest six phases of TA (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2013; Kim and Beehr 2017; Braun and Clarke 2021c), at times these stages can merge, because of the iterative nature of this form. Transparency on why researchers do what they do is important because of the subjective nature of reflexive TA. Terry (2017) suggests therefore that coding can be strong or weak, not right, or wrong. Below is an overview of the process for this study:

Phase One: Data familiarisation. An initial read through of all hard copy transcripts was completed, to start early familiarisation and make notes on areas of interest. An example of data familiarisation on a transcript relating to participant 11 can be found in appendix 7. During data familiarisation, there is no coding, but rather a consideration on the possible meanings of conversations, along with early identification of commonalities and differences emerging. All WPS transcripts were read together followed by the PDA and employer transcripts.

Phase Two: Generating codes was then undertaken via NVIVO. Complete coding was used (Braun and Clarke 2013) in which pertinent codes to the research questions were identified and data was attached to multiple codes (see an example of multiple codes for one passage for Participant 11 in

appendix 8). Both small and large chunks of data were coded, to one or multiple codes. There was a mixture of "semantic", surface codes (Braun and Clarke 2013, 2021a) such as "thrown in the deep end" which related to the language used by participants and latent more "conceptual" conceptual codes (Braun and Clarke 2013, 2021a) such as self-efficacy, which were influenced by the researcher's knowledge of the topic. To ensure a thoroughness of approach, data were multi-coded where appropriate. So, for example data concerning "trust" was initially coded to a code called "trust", but also to any code which related to its environment, such as "line manager", or "organisational culture". This allowed an understanding of the context of the data and how participants had constructed their view of "trust" and to provide a "checking system" to ensure a robust and thorough approach. In total, 131 codes were developed (appendix 8), although some of these codes were very broad, because of the multi-coding. There were some surprises, particularly around the challenges of PO, as these were somewhat different to previous studies. This mainly related to the context of this group of participants. For example, "territoriality", which is a widely posited outcome of PO, was rarely identified, whilst feeling "the weight of ownership" was mentioned more frequently, compared to the PO literature. Nevertheless, there was always a possibility that differences might be identified, given these participants were situated within an early career stage of their working life, unlike most participants in previous studies who were more experienced.

Phase Three: Generating initial themes involves actively identifying patterns from the codes. In appendix 9, you can see how the codes were clustered together or combined where necessary. As this was a reflective process, the following stages were not clearly defined in a codebook form, but are more aligned to reflexive TA's interactive questioning of the data, demonstrated through the researcher's journey to move from Phase 3 through to phase 5. Some codes such as "psychological safety" were listed across three categories early on, denoting how challenging the process can be at the early stages of analysis. On paper the process sounds very logical, but actually it was perplexing, frustrating and challenging at times. The researcher did follow Ripley's (2011) advice "on returning" and left time during analysis to contemplate, often via long walks which is the researchers own "restorative

space" (Rhew et al. 2021). Whilst juggling a PHD alongside work can be challenging, sometimes the gap between stages was helpful thinking time! Some codes, such as "additional learning needs" resulted in very little coding and did not relate to PO, but rather to the placement and so were removed. From this point. It became easier to see some potential themes and an initial thematic map was produced (appendix 10) with the themes. Whilst reflexive TA does not usually include tables, for ease of understanding, I have included a table to show how the codes link to themes.

Nonetheless, after careful consideration, the themes in appendix 10 showed some overlap with "Socialisation" "Organisational Influence" and "What is Ownership", demonstrating codes that could fit into any theme, such as the code "rituals".

Phases 4 and 5 involves **reviewing and defining themes,** as it is suggested to be rare for first attempts to result in a final thematic map (Terry 2017). This was certainly true in this instance. When reflecting on codes, it became clear that there was a social construction to ownership for these early career professionals, which involved them being "given ownership" in some instances and then "accepting ownership" or "taking ownership", if it wasn't given. At this point these became two important themes. In addition, on consideration, it was clear that PO Routes and Motives seemed to have been lost in phase 3, so they were reintroduced. "Strength of PO feelings" was also introduced to capture the different levels of feelings that individuals might have. PO outcomes and Future Careers remained, due to their clear links to the research questions.

Appendix 11 demonstrates the final stages of actively generating themes. The PO motives and routes fall under the themes of "taking ownership", so they were combined. PO outcomes was renamed "Pleasure and Pain" as it was felt to better represent participants feelings towards ownership. Finally, future careers were renamed "longevity or liquidity", because the picture is far more complicated than the theme "future careers" suggested.

Phase six relates to **writing the report,** which is seen as the final stage of the process. Eldh et al. (2020) suggest that there are limited journal articles which define the purpose of including quotations or a justification for their inclusion.

Consequently, there is very little guidance regarding a framework for quotation inclusion. Patton (2002) suggest quotes are essential to hear the participants' voice and concurs with Sandelowski (1994) that they are illustrative of findings. There is also concerns relating to the ethics of anonymising quotes and stating a participant number, along with research integrity in not picking controversial quotes if they are not relevant (Eldh et al. 2020). For this research, the author thought participant voice was incredibly important and has included some longer quotes if they illustrate findings. The intention was to include all participants, but inevitably there are some participants who provided better illustrations of the phenomenon than others, because of their experience of PO. The researcher was careful to ensure that quotes were not overused and their words were not changed. Participants were given a number and their names were never used (Eldh et al. 2020). The final thematic map can be seen in figure two below (a more detailed version, with the codes linking to themes, can be found in appendix 11 and links to the research questions as follows:

1. How might psychological ownership of work-related targets be constructed by individuals at the start of their career? Relates to themes "giving and taking ownership"
2. What factors seem to influence the development of work- related psychological ownership targets in this specific group of individuals? Relates to themes "giving and taking ownership"
3. What do these individuals, line managers and Placement Development Advisors perceive to be the potential outcomes (both positive and negative) of developing psychological ownership at the start of a career? Relates to theme "pleasure and pain"
4. How might psychological ownership influence future career development plans in early career professionals? Relates to theme "liquidity and longevity"

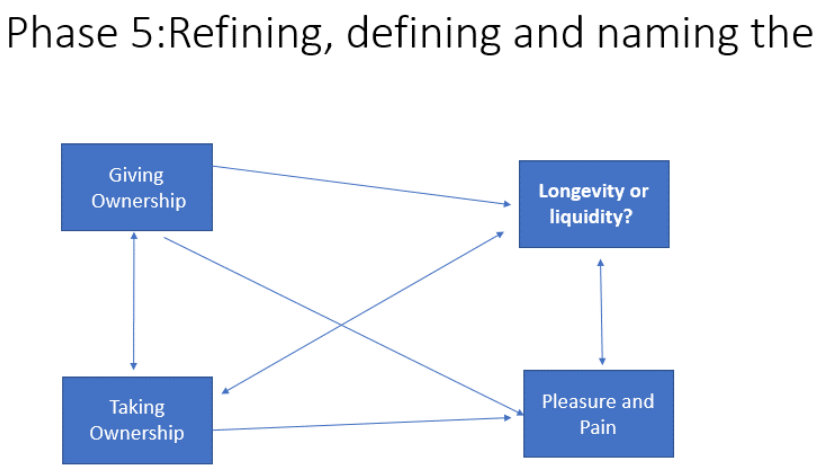

Figure 3: Final Themes

These themes will be discussed in more detail during the analysis and findings section.

Whilst the overall structure of this analysis looks ordered, it was time consuming, messy, iterative and perplexing at times (see appendix 12 for one example of the many hand-drawn mind maps that I put together). Nevertheless, it was also fascinating, thought-provoking, inspiring and sad to remind myself of their stories, and I feel privileged that the participants were so honest and generous with their time.

3.8 Trustworthy Research

Trustworthy research is one of the cornerstones of academic research and differs significantly in qualitative and quantitative research due to different theoretical perspectives and methods (Williams and Morrow 2009). They suggest three elements relating to trustiness of qualitative research:

- Data integrity
- Balancing subjectivity and reflectivity
- Clearly communicating findings

This section and the following section will discuss these three elements starting with balancing subjectivity and reflectivity.

3.8.1 Reflexive Thematic Analysis: Researcher Perspective (subjectivity)

The researcher's own subjectivity plays a part in qualitative research and particularly within Reflexive TA. Reflexivity:

> *"means turning of the researcher lens back onto oneself to recognise and take responsibility for one's own situatedness within the research and the effect it may have on the setting and people" (Berger 2015, p.220)*

This 'looking at oneself' relates to the whole research process from the type of research questions formed, through to the final analysis and writing up of papers. By continually reflecting throughout the process, individuals can be aware of their biases and use them as a frequent reminder of one's own complexity.

Within this study, my own prior experience of working with individuals at the start of their career on placement and graduate programmes means that I have some knowledge of early career professionals. I was therefore interested in studying this group of participants, because I had seen some ECPs quickly demonstrate ownership feelings and I was intrigued on how some individuals might develop PO, whilst it was less observable in others. I expected other researchers to share this interest, but to date this is still an under-explored area. In a way, this was exciting, as it was an opportunity to do a different study, but also frustrating, as I had to complete this doctorate reviewing research from a very different perspective.

I realised very early on that I was interested in the social construction of PO and that influenced my research questions, to emphasise the interest in the initial building blocks of PO. I was interested not in the existence of PO, because my own background and experiences told me it did exist, but rather how it is constructed in the workplace. What elements might be important and how does it manifest in people and between people?

I have always had strong feelings of ownership (even though I was not aware of the theory of PO) starting with my “Saturday” job at the age of sixteen when I was made a supervisor and so when I first read about this topic it resonated clearly. I know it had to be “mine!”

What was interesting however was to hear about the challenges of PO. I have been situated in PO all my working life, but it was only after hearing others’ stories that I realised the burden of PO. Whilst I am at a different point of my career, some of the stories reverberated uncomfortably in my thoughts. I started this research with perhaps rose-coloured glasses framing my personal thoughts about PO. By reflecting throughout the process and having the time to think, I now believe I have a better-rounded view of PO. This study isn’t about me, but from the participants’ words, I have learnt more about my own experience of PO. They have a slightly different context, but I believe that some aspects have resonated at different time periods throughout my own career, including now. Nevertheless, there are also differences which continually emphasised to me regarding the complexity of PO. There seems to be a smorgasbord of influences and rather like a recipe, if you add different weights of components at different time periods, the outcome will vary.

I positioned myself during the interviews as an “insider-outsider”. My experience teaching many of the participants about the placement process made me conscious of my insider status and positioned me somewhat as an “expert”, whilst at the same time, I was an “outsider” in their world of work, and I was grateful the WPS welcomed me into their world. Early research regarding insider-outside roles in qualitative research was often characterised by three roles: Peripheral, active, and complete members (Adler and Adler 1987). This doesn’t quite characterise the position I found myself in, whereby I was a “powerful insider” due to my teaching role, a “knowledge insider” due to my experience of the workplace, yet a “workplace outsider” due to my lack of knowledge about their WPS experience and an “experienced outsider” because I was at a different point in my career. I could also have been seen as an “ownership insider or outsider”, depending on the WPS, because of my own experience of ownership. However, I chose not to share these experiences. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) have defined this duality as “the space

between", whereby dialectical differences / similarities are not ignored, but not over emphasised, and this is the approach I tried to harness.

By acknowledging my subjectivity, the researcher followed Clarke and Braun (2018); Braun and Clarke (2019, 2021a) six phases actively, trying to balance participants' meanings and the researcher's interpretations. The most challenging aspect occurred during the data analysis and the subsequent writing up of the themes from an experience told to me by P15. He had in his words organised a successful event, but on the way home had a car crash. I struggled considering if I should add this to the analysis or if it should be left out, because it felt quite ghoulish. It took me some time to realise, it was the participant's decision to include it, not mine, and it was my interpretation that felt it was ghoulish to include, not his. My role is to examine and interpret, whilst understanding by doing this, my values may creep into the research. This was a good lesson to learn about letting the data talk, rather than for me in the role of researcher to make value judgements. I have always prided myself in believing that I am objective, but like everyone else my previous background and experiences have shaped my thinking, which I need to be as aware as a researcher.

The following section relates to the other posited elements of trustworthiness; data integrity and communication (Williams and Morrow 2009).

3.8.2 Data Integrity and Communicating Results

Data integrity relies on dependability and adequacy (Williams and Morrow 2009) which this study has worked to achieve. Adequacy in reflexive TA, as mentioned previously, does not rely on fulfilling sample sizes, but instead focuses on comprehensiveness and variations in the sample (Levitt et al. 2017). As mentioned in section 3.7, there is a suitable level of breadth and variation of experiences within this sample, which includes triangulation from employers and PDAs.

Dependency relates to the clear articulation of research methods and strategies, which this chapter has fulfilled in the data collection and data analysis sections.

Clear communications and application refer to opportunities to link relevant literature to the topic and situating the participants, to ensure the reader understands the operating context (Williams and Morrow 2009). This is required for work to create impact. Hopefully by reading this thesis, this will be achieved.

3.8.3 Limitations

This work is context-bound, relating to the experiences of a particular group of individuals at a particular time period. Therefore the intent is not to generalise to the wider population, rather instead to widen the conversation regarding PO development and offer a different perspective. Mayring (2007) asks if generalisation is important or required in a study result, whilst others including (Lincoln et al. 1985; Carminati 2018; Denzin and Lincoln 2018) suggest than within an interpretivist paradigm, the emphasis is understanding individuals, especially within a particular social context. This is a limitation of the study, though future research could be undertaken with other population groups, so that transferability is achieved (Lincoln et al. 1985; Carminati 2018). Hopefully, this is a starting point regarding early PO development and further studies relating to early PO, from both qualitative and quantitative perspectives, would be of interest.

Nonetheless, given the demographic similarities between individuals in terms of education levels, location and race, further studies with greater diversity in these areas would be beneficial. This might include studies with other groups of early career joiners, such as those who work straight after college or recent graduates or individuals from different education systems. Some studies relating to individuals in different industries away from office work would also be beneficial. As these WPS are only working at the organisation for a short time period, it could be said that their mindsets may be different compared to those in a permanent role. Nonetheless, a number of WPS and employers saw their experience as an opportunity to lead to a graduate role via the organisation's 'talent pipeline', so there were reasons to do well alongside the obvious point of gaining some work experience. Nonetheless it would be interesting to see commonalities with any future studies relating to temporary, contract or permanent workers.

There are also geographical and cultural limitations related to early career professionals. Work Placements are not undertaken worldwide and so different countries may have different routes for early career professionals. That said, given PO has seen to be transferable across countries, there may be similarities in other early career professionals.

The researcher would have welcomed more employers to be involved in the study, to provide greater opportunities for triangulation and for providing different perspectives. The challenge in this study was trying to reach participants and employers from the same organisation, which proved very challenging. Morse (2015) suggests that triangulation can occur with two or more data sets and thus with the PDA interviews, the researcher believes they have achieved triangulation. The three employers who participated, demonstrated a variety of perspectives towards ownership, which was partly due to the organisational culture, but also related to their own viewpoint. Notwithstanding, it is acknowledged that whilst this study was keen to ascertain the perceptions of early career students, further studies with both employees and supervisors would be beneficial in the future.

Future research would benefit from multiple interviews with participants over a longer time period to see how PO development may wax and wane. It seems unlikely that PO is entirely stable and it would be interesting to see the factors which influences these changes. This was not possible for this research and is also one of the study limitations.

3.9 Summary

Chapter three has outlined the researcher's philosophical assumption as one that believes there are multiple realities with multiple truths. Their theoretical perspective is most closely aligned to that of an interpretivist and both this perspective and their philosophical assumptions led them to develop a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews as their research method. The participants in the study were students from one university undertaking a work placement; supervisors who support work placement students and Placement Development Advisors who visit students in the workplace. Data was analysed using reflexive thematic analysis which acknowledges the

researcher's role in the interpretation of data. The trustworthiness of the analysis was considered essential with data integrity protocols utilised and a balance between subjectivity and reflexivity. The final element of trustworthiness will be ascertained via the Findings section in chapter four.

Chapter 4 Psychological Ownership in Early Career Professionals; Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction to Chapter

This chapter aims to explore the findings relating to the development of Psychological Ownership in individuals at the start of their career, using a sample of students from a post-1992 university. Four key themes were developed from this study (giving ownership; taking ownership; pleasure and pain; longevity or liquidity) providing an opportunity to hear the WPS discussing their PO experiences, with employers and PDAs providing additional perspectives and corroboration. The section starts with a reminder of the participant demographics and an overview of how individuals described ownership in the workplace.

Because this predominantly inductive study used qualitative research to understand the real-life experiences of PO, the results do not clearly map to previous PO research, which is mainly quantitative research, but rather reflects the experiences of this group of individuals at the start of their career in a fixed term job role.

4.1.1 Theme Overview

The four themes generated from the interviews reflect an active interpretation of the interviews with WPS, employers and PDAs:

"Giving Ownership" relates to the ritualistic, relational, and organisational process that permissions an individual at the start of their career to take job-related PO. It is an active, dynamic process situated within organisations relating to three key components: organisational culture, supervisory support and trust, resulting in the permissioning of job-related PO.

"Taking ownership", the second theme, can be developed in two instances. The incumbent who has been permissioned ownership, accepts job-related ownership from the supervisor / line manager and takes ownership of the relevant task, project or job role. Secondly, in instances where ownership have not been given or permissioned, the WPS may still actively choose to initiate job-related PO. Forms of "taking ownership" rely on the

individual feeling self-efficacy, linking to WPS self-identity or sense of belonging, and having a clear PO route to taking ownership via routes such as control, self-congruity, investing self, some elements of psychological safety or a desire to build intimate knowledge of the target.

Most PO research has focussed on organisational outcomes; however, the "*pleasure and pain"* theme relates to the feelings and outcomes of PO according to this group of participants. There is a duality to PO which in this study seems to imply that the stronger the feelings of job-related PO, the stronger the strength of both positive and negative emotions and outcomes. Because these individuals were at the start of their career, those with strong feelings for PO targets often felt unable to discuss the weight of ownership that they felt on their shoulders.

Finally theme four: "*longevity or liquidity",* discusses how job-related ownership feelings may impact on the future graduate career plans of this group of early career professionals. Within this theme, there will be a discussion regarding an additional PO target which may compete with job-related and organisational PO, that of 'career PO'.

4.1.2 Participant Context

In section 3.6.2, the sample composition revealed the demographics of the participants. However there are also differences in terms of the organisational sector, the types of job roles and the size of the company, be it a global organisation or a SME based in the UK. Table four provides an overview of this information. Some organisations hire WPS as part of a formal intern scheme, which often consists of a programme of events together, such as onboarding, group projects and mentoring. Informal schemes are often when there is only one WPS at the organisation and/or they joined the organisation on a fixed term contract. The mixture of job roles reflects the breadth of placement roles often available to WPS:

Participant Number	Organisation Sector	UK or Global Org	Formal/ Informal Scheme	Job Role
P1	Technology	Global	F	Resource Coordinator
P2	Construction	UK	I	Project Manager
P3	Technology	Global	F	PR Intern
P4	Technology	Global	F	Legal Intern
P5	Car Leasing	Global	F	Management Placement
P6	Engineering	UK	I	Operations Assistant
P7	Education	UK	F	Project Support Administrator
P8	Technology	Global	F	Sales Development Intern
P9	Beverages	UK	I	Territory Sales Manager
P10	Retail	Global	F	Manager
P11	Technology	Global	F	Marketing Campaign Executive
P12	Technology	Global	F	Early Professional Talent Acquisition Coordinator
P13	Media	Global	F	Business Continuity intern
P14	Technology	Global	F	Employer Branding & Marketing Co-ordinator
P15	Technology	Global	F	Early Professional Attraction & Engagement Events Coordinator
P16	Transport	Global	F	Human Resources Advisor
P17	Finance	UK	F	Branch Support
P18	Service	UK	I	Commercial Support Executive
P19	Engineering	Global	F	Commercial Intern
P20	Technology	Global	F	UKI Field Marketing Specialist

Table Four: WPS Organisational Information

Participants typically applied for between 3 to around 50 placements with some (P3,P9,P10, P11, P14, P15, P17,P18 and P19) undertaking multiple interviews and assessment centres. Whilst some individuals (P9,P10,P15 and P17) had offers from more than one organisation and therefore had an element of choice, most accepted the first offer made to them and were pleased to have been made an offer. P14 provided a typical example of a WPS who was very focussed on securing an early placement:

> *"I was really keen to get a placement early so I remember not being that fussy…I applied to 17 in total…But I secured this role…by Christmas Day" (P14)*

Some students decided to move away from the traditional list of organisations and looked locally for job roles (P7 and P9) or made an active decision to work for a smaller organisation (P2).

Some participants were very proactive in their placement search (P1, P2, P3, P5, P9, P10, P11, P14, P15, P19), whereas others were less zealous *"I started the search, quite late"* (P6)

Very few had a clear idea of what type of job role or organisation they wanted to work for. Whilst students spoke of frustrations with the recruitment process (feeling the process was impersonal or employers not responding), by the time they joined the organisation, they were positive about the job role / organisation.

Many participants had a formal induction either with other new starters within the organisation or with other WPS students if the organisation hired large numbers of such. P9's induction included a formal rotation around other parts of the business, which was unusual. Within some organisations, roles are continuously filled by WPS students, which often results in a short handover / shadowing period with the former incumbent (P1, P3, P4, P7, P12, P13, P14, P15, P17, P19, P20). This allowed individuals to "learn the ropes" and ask questions informally to their peers.

Other participants who were interviewed for this study are shown in table 5 and are either supervisors who work at organisations that hire placement students or Placement Development Advisors who visit and support the WPS whilst in the workplace, providing pastoral care where required and helping the WPS

reflect on their experience and skill development. These other participants allow us to triangulate the data to provide some different perspectives within the context of this study.

Participant	Organisational Sector	Role Area
E1a	Education	Project Management
E1b	Education	Project Management
E2	Technology	Recruitment & Engagement Lead
E3	Finance	Director
PDA1	Cover all sectors	Placement Support
PDA2		Placement Support
PDA3		Placement Support

Table Five: Employer and PDA roles

4.1.3 Participant's interpretation of Ownership

Participants in the study were asked, "what does ownership in the workplace mean to you" Previous studies have neglected a personal perception of ownership, which negates the social experiences of how ownership is lived, but also the different perceptions which permeate people's lives.

A commonly provided answer from the WPS revolved around responsibility, with P7 providing a typical observation:

> *"Ownership for me I think is having responsibility of someone or something or a project and making sure that it's that the best it can be." P7*

Ownership was mainly mentioned in relation to responsibility for tasks (P1,P2, P3, P5, P8, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15, P16), projects (P1, P7, P19), people (P2, P7, P10, P13) including themselves and their career (P1, P5, P8, P15, P19 and P20).

Positive outcomes, such as achievement (P8, P12, P15), adding value (P6), fulfilment (P4) and pride (P3, P8, P12, P20), were included within these perceptions, along with the more negative connotation of owning up if things go wrong (P5, P15, P20).

Four WPS provided slightly different perspectives (P9, P16, P17 and P18), emphasising a sense of belonging or "we" more than other WPS, as indicated here:

> "to me it's a sense of belonging in the company, that I contribute directly to the company… it is very much a sense of how I feel connected to everyone else" P17

The PDAs also used the term responsibility to define workplace ownership, although PDA 2 also suggested *"it's basically running your job as though it was your business"* to emphasise a higher level of responsibility.

Responses from employers E1B, E2 and E3 were similar to those of many WPS, referring to the responsibility element *"taking responsibility for a task, for a project, for something and wanting to carry it through to the end"* (E3) although employer 1A referred to the sense of belonging:

> *"For me it's more about, I'd say it's more about loyalty. So you know being loyal to be you, being loyal to the department, your boss, your work colleagues, that kind of thing. That's what I see it as"* (E1A)

Such similarities between participant groups indicate the relational, socially-constructed nature of PO, which appears value-laden with societal norms. Furby (1978) in her research of children's development of feelings of ownership for possessions indicated children often role-modelled adults taking care of their possessions and it may be that experiences of ownership with others and especially those more senior may play a part in how PO is viewed.

Sense of belonging is a key motive for PO (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003) and therefore for some individuals (P9, 16, 17 and 18), ownership for them required them to be part of a group. Responsibility has been seen by Pierce et al. (2001); Pierce et al. (2004) as an outcome of PO, rather than as part of the construct. Nevertheless, this does provide some context regarding how PO may be perceived by this group of participants. Whilst these responses are

slightly different to Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) definition, what many of the participants acknowledge is the personal demarcation of targets, but also allude to a number of targets which can be both material (a project) or immaterial (the organisation).

4.2 Theme One: Giving Ownership; Job-related PO

This section will discuss a key theme regarding the process of job-related PO development, that of "giving ownership" to early career professionals. There were three key elements to its successful formulation (shown below in figure three): organisational culture, the line manager, supervisor, mentor, or other person responsible for the day-to-day management of the WPS (hereon in named as the supervisor) and trust. These will be discussed in more detail below.

Figure Four: Elements that Contribute to Giving Ownership

Job-related ownership was constructed via a relational social process with some supervisors "giving" ownership to their WPS. The act of giving task / job-related ownership was mentioned by both employers *("So literally I give ownership"* E3) and WPS ("*I think that was due to my manager actually. Full on giving me that ownership"* P11) often initially via a building block of tasks. This provides a

ritualistic signal and permission to the employee that ownership has been transferred to them, even if initially on a small scale. Watkins et al. (2015) in their work on digital possessions refer to this as 'transferability', in which ownership is passed, exchanged, or gifted to another.

"Ownership" was a key organisational value for employer 2, and they provided early signalling to participants, via the recruitment process, regarding ownership expectations. During assessment centre activities and interviews, ownership was a measured competency and thus potential new hires were required to demonstrate and provide examples of previous ownership experiences during interviews, as well as showing ownership in group activities:

> *"during an exercise we would be looking at, is that student….taking ownership of something…ownership of an idea they've had, ownership of being the timekeeper, the mediator, the leader…taking ownership and then following it through" E2*

Other organisations also signalled the "giving" of ownership via their website and within the recruitment and selection process. Participant 10 chose an organisation which consistently stated that WPS would undertake challenging work and great responsibility rather than (in her words) a *"nice"* organisation where she also had an employment offer. She perceived their indications online and during the assessment centre to be:

> *"this year is going to kill you…if you can't do it, that's fine… but we need people that can…I was sort of like…I think I can do that and if I can't, I definitely want to try*." P11

This was a highly regarded placement with considerable social status, which allowed a participant with high self-efficacy and who was achievement-orientated to relate a role back to their motives / desires.

Consequently, is seems possible for individuals to use the PO route of self-congruity (Morewedge et al. 2021) even before they join an organisation. For some individuals this early signalling provides opportunities for the WPS to build self-congruity with an organisational target prior to joining and in this

instance allowed a WPS to activate the PO motives of self-efficacy and self-identity (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003).

One large technology organisation was particularly clever with a ritual providing an informal ceremony of incorporation during the WPS induction, which helped individuals understand more about the company's products during a group activity:

> *"they gave us a song and a XXX product or service and we had to rewrite the lyrics for that which was quite funny to see everyone's attempts, but it just meant that you felt really relaxed" P1*

Providing opportunities to attach self and company together at such an early point can only help to speed up the onboarding process and allow individuals to feel that they belong.

In organisations that had an ongoing rotation of WPS, the first "giving ownership" rituals often lay with the outgoing student. During their last few weeks in the organisation, the previous incumbent had often carefully crafted a handover document which specified the role, key contacts, and systems. P1 provides a representative example of the experience of those who had a handover with the outgoing WPS:

> *"it was one of the interns, XXX she put together a slide deck and one note file that was all of the information that we could possibly need and we spent a lot of our time with her just going through it and making sure we knew everything" P1*

This is simultaneously part of an initiation ritual for the new postholder but is also part of the divestment ritual for the outgoing WPS and thus is populated with symbolism and meaning. "My role" is transferred from one person to another, providing opportunities to share "their" perspective, "their" insights, and "their" territory. This is intentional ownership transfer (Kalish and Anderson 2011) providing a clear demarcation of one individual gaining ownership rights and another losing their ownership rights. However, whilst this handover could be fraught with territorial, contagion and other negative emotions, most participants found this a positive experience. They gained "insider" knowledge from the current WPS, opportunities to learn the ropes of their new job role and ask, "stupid questions." The outgoing WPS also felt a sense of pride in handing

over something that was perceived as theirs *"I was leaving…but because I.. really cared about it, and I wanted it to succeed for the next intern"* (P11). P14's experience was a common example of the peer-to-peer support found in the student handover process:

> *"loads of advice. About their year, ups and downs…saying it's okay, don't be nervous, you will get into it…how they handled things, and not to take things personally" P14*

New WPS also benefitted from seeing their possible selves and settling any nerves (Markus and Nurius 1986). Employer 2 suggested however that it can be very daunting to see the amazing things that an outgoing intern is undertaking and so reassures the WPS that they will quickly be in a similar position *"3 months and I promise you will feel …where you don't have to check something before you do it."* (E2).

Generally, the perception of these handovers was considered positive by participants, although P13 did suggest that the picture painted by the outgoing incumbent was not realistic.

Once the prior student had given role ownership to the new incumbent or for those individuals who didn't benefit from this form of handover (P2,6,9,10 and 16), it was often the supervisor and occasionally the team who managed the process of "giving" ownership. P2's experience was unusual as he shadowed one of the Managing Directors *"for the first two-three weeks I was just shadowing the MD"* (P2).

P6 by his own admission started his placement search quite late and eventually found a placement via a friend who had worked for the organisation previously. Whilst everyone in the organisation was very welcoming, after the first week he *"hated it"*. With retrospect he believes it was the shock of starting a work placement, but it wasn't uncommon for these new workers to have a crisis of confidence or identity. Both P4 and P10, who were both confident go-getting types, suggested they struggled in their first week *"I think I went home for four out of five days that week in tears"* (P10). The separation rites of a liminal process are often characterised by disorientation and uncertainty, but expediate the sense-making process (Ibarra 1999). As suggested by Mele et

al. (2021) the border zone between education and the workplace can be scattered with meaning-making activities, as the participants come to terms with their new lives and changing personas.

Even P19 who sought out an organisation which would provide him with an elevated level of responsibility demonstrated that fear:

> *"Yeah, it was scary especially the first few calls and things…it was scary but it was one of those things that I felt … I am appreciative of it now because I feel like that's why I've managed to learn so quickly"*
> *P19*

The context of these participants is different from most PO studies and so it is worth emphasising the challenges faced when starting your first key role. Participants mentioned difficulties such as the lack of structure or access to their supervisor hampering their ability to settle in and feel comfortable. P18's manager worked remotely, and she didn't meet her for the first four months with all contact by email *"my colleagues did say recently….for the first week you looked absolutely petrified"* (P18).

This is a liminal period where the WPS are between two different identities and seek safety and in particular trust and organisational support (Zhang 2020) as reiterated by the PDAs: *"A handover….is important….it's amazing how many companies that doesn't always have that"* (PDA3). This feels particularly pertinent for employers hiring young new employees during / post pandemic as working from home may result in further feelings of isolation and will need a greater level of structure / access to a supervisor to feel safe within their environment.

Ownership of tasks was found to be a means of constructing job-related PO via an ongoing development of the range and importance of tasks, often directed by the supervisor or team. This "building block" approach employed by many organisations allowed supervisors to demonstrate trust in their new charges and to help their new employees understand the business environment with which they were now operating in, using a psychologically safe form. In many ways this process is akin to that described by Furby (1978) when considering the development of feelings of possession and ownership in children. Initially dependent on others to provide them with possessions, they

gradually assert themselves to take control of the acquisition process, before becoming responsible for these possessions.

When considering how "giving ownership" developed, ownership of tasks allowed new employees to gradually take control and cultivate tasks often investing self.

Employer two, whose organisation values included ownership explained the process that was commonly utilised in the ritual of giving ownership after the previous WPS has departed the organisation:

> *"Although we hand-hold them, they do it, so I will be sat with them, but they'll be the one writing the email…So you have that bit … where the old intern's left, I then have to kind of bridge the gap for a little bit of really hand holding them through, how would you do this, what would you say." E2*

These are life cycle rituals for those organisations who have a continual WPS in roles, with the supervisor demonstrating at an early point that the WPS needs to control and invest themselves into their job role. This was also confirmed by the students within this organisation and other organisations (P1, 5,10, 11, 12,13, 14, 15, 19, 20) demonstrating the pride felt when given larger tasks *"I actually got given for the first time, quite a big task. I had my own job that was just me"* (P11).

Using the building block of "giving ownership" of tasks culminated in WPS and supervisors suggesting that job-related PO took between three to six months. Some organisations (such as employer 2) embedded ownership in their culture facilitating the supervisor / team to "give" ownership, resulting in their new employees developing job-related PO within three months *"But yeah, three months I think broadly"* (E2), whereas in some organisations, where ownership was less embedded, it was closer to six months *"probably about the middle of the placement"* (P7). P17's experience was typical of how WPS built knowledge of their job roles:

> *"a couple of months.in the first month, getting my footing, in the following month it was developing what I'd sort of grasped…the third month, it was not mastery…I'd learned how to do areas competently by*

myself…responsibility fell on me in the workplace and I sort of owned that section of what we do in the office" P17

This broad overview encapsulates how in the minds of WPS, they built knowledge, understanding and confidence during the socialisation's period. Whilst this theme mainly focusses on "giving" job-related ownership, there are also opportunities for organisations to simultaneously facilitate the building of organisational PO in this process. The coming sections will continue to demonstrate how job-related ownership was developed by highlighting three elements which seem crucial when "giving ownership" to this group of WPS; role of supervisor; organisational culture and trust. Nevertheless, there will also be references to instances that inadvertently seemed to expediate the development of organisational PO.

4.2.1 Supervisor Role in "Giving Ownership"

Supervisors, or in some instances the mentor, were instrumental in the development of job-related PO in this group of participants as they often permissioned, gave or denied ownership. When asked about the role of the supervisor, the PDAs suggested it was "huge" (PDA1 and PDA2):

"The best examples… the managers are supportive but not micromanaging um… encouraging the students to take responsibility and to have confidence…and that does come a little from being hands off but there when the student needs it" PDA3

Previous PO literature regarding relational factors influencing PO is scarce, relating mainly to ethical and transformational leadership (Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Avey et al. 2012; Shouse 2017). Given the context of this study relates to early career professionals, studies regarding senior leaders are less relevant to these WPS participants, who lack direct access to individuals in this position. Instead, supervisors or mentors provide a relational link to the organisation and are the most likely individuals to "give" ownership and to act as a role model or possible selves (Markus and Nurius 1986).

The process described below, was typical of the process described by WPS on how they were given ownership:

"She slowly started testing me…it started with answer a few emails, you get back to them, you do this and then slowly like, oh, this is the big document you can monitor it" P11

Task ownership helped integrate individuals into their role and build on the handover provided. Task ownership built relational trust between the supervisor and the WPS, with both testing each other regarding the boundaries of the job role and the relationship. *"He sent me to cover an area…on my own…he was hard on me, but in being hard.. I worked a lot harder"* P10

As mentioned previously, employer 2's organisation had ownership as a core cultural value expected of all staff. She demonstrated the building block approach that was used with new WPS:

> "So it gives them more tangible things and bigger projects, I think… It will get to the point when they're probably nine, ten months in, that they are owning massive things and they are the person doing it. It's nothing to do with me at all…be part of my team, but actually they have owned from start to finish." E2

Nevertheless, these building blocks were not just about constructing ownership to larger building blocks, but also to provide context so that the WPS could see how tasks joined together as part of a bigger picture. E3 suggests how they manage this process:

> "we think it's very important that as they learn, they have context, so they have a framework on which to build the task, so that no task is just a little silo of its own." E3

E2 concurred suggesting she would often bring the WPS into meetings or onto calls to shadow her regarding *"things that aren't their direct day job, but…things that affect us as a team"* (E2).

Context-setting along with building ownership helped WPS confidence and feeling part of a team. These were key relational foundations and, when "giving" ownership worked well, helped move the individual from owning tasks to owning their job role. P14 suggested her supervisor gave her so much independence that she realised that the work was her responsibility. But this ownership went beyond just opportunities to control, craft and cultivate the job role and included setting her own deadlines *"there's a lot of freedom with how I work and when I do the tasks, as long as I'm meeting deadlines it's completely fine"* P14. Other participants at employer two (P12,15, 19) particularly mentioned the opportunities to choose where to work, which again linked back to feeling trusted by supervisors and the organisation. It wasn't a case of just deciding how to do their job but having ownership for their working life – another building block to job-related PO. Nonetheless building ownership of the job role simultaneously facilitated boundary and threshold-crossing from student to professional (Mele 2021).

Context-setting and feeling that they were given greater opportunities to be part of the team also provided a connection to the organisation. Pierce et al. (2004) suggest that job-related ownership is frequently stronger than organisational PO, which this study would concur with, yet frequently the company were praised by the WPS, when actually it was mainly due to the way in which they were managed by the supervisor / team. Participant 15 provides a typical comment demonstrating how that connection with the organisation is often built by staff members:

> *"So I think that it's a, it's a great company to work for, first off. I think that since I've been here, I've been treated incredibly well" P15*

Therefore, whilst the process of "giving" ownership is mainly pertinent to the job role, the organisation may benefit by being nested in this positive relationship (which will be discussed further in 4.5.4). Whilst sometimes structural elements such as being able to work from home, were important, actually the relational element of belonging was as crucial.

Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011) study of family business owners' leadership styles suggested both transformational and transactional forms of leadership had a positive impact on the PO of non-family employees. Whilst leadership was not part of original aim of this study, this research does strongly suggest that for these early career professionals the supervisor role appears to be critical. Whilst there were indications of both transformational "*XXX has been such an inspiration to me, such a role model….he's had such an impact on my life.*" (P2) and transactional leadership *"my Director was very rulebook focused, everything had to abide by the rules…very strict"* P13, in most instances, the WPS worked with lower-level managers and had a very different experience. Role relationships did however serve both task-related and socio-psychological *needs "So it's that support whenever I do start to question things. She goes, No, you're an idiot you'll be fine. She's been incredible for me" (P4)* to facilitate ownership development and confidence with the supervisor or mentor taking a key role .

Supervisors were conduits ensuring that ownership ran all the way through the WPS work. E1 discussed a conversation with P7 after she had taken responsibility for an office move. Whilst she did a fantastic job with the move, she then left the empty crates in the centre of the floor rather than arranging them to be removed. E1 talked to her about "hinching it" and effectively owning the entire process rather than 90% of this large task.

E2 suggested that supervisors were the "safety net" that would catch the WPS if they fell, but conversely would also give them a great deal of work to push them a little out of their comfort zone. The participants at this organisation did generally concur regarding the perceived organisational support (Zhang 2020) *"They obviously put a lot of effort and a lot of trust in placement students"* (P20), although P12 did have several challenges working at the organisation which are discussed in the shadow side of ownership section.

A coaching style appeared successfully used by supervisors in the development of PO, especially during the newcomer socialisation period, with employer 3 suggesting how he coached WPS to create, control and invest selves in their work.

"it was a really good article, but I wanted to get her to start to think critically...And she crafted it completely differently…she's now created something that is so much better …So things like that… showing them how to work...how to construct things" E3

This was an iterative process in which the supervisor was permissioning ownership, autonomy, self-investment, and control, whilst providing developmental support. However, as an experienced manager, E3 was also aware of his potential for giving too much ownership to individuals and that due to their background, their motivation, or their lack of direction in terms of the task, they might not accept it:

"So my potential for over-delegation which I recognise, doesn't sit well with people who don't like ownership, but it sits very well with people who do." E3

Some WPS did struggle to develop early ownership, as there was limited transference of ownership from their supervisor. As mentioned previously, P18's supervisor worked remotely (pre-pandemic interviews), and she did not meet her in the first 4 months of the placement. The opportunities for transference were confined to emails and the occasional telephone call which left the individual lacking in direction and confidence *"it's quite hard not knowing you know, what it is to have an actual Manager and to be managed, basically"* (P18). In this instance, the role of *"giving"* ownership moved to another team member and over time the WPS did develop greater confidence and task ownership. Nevertheless, by her own admission she still maintained an intern identity and didn't feel clearly permissioned to take ownership in many situations: *"Make decisions for the company, which is quite hard to do sometimes because…as an intern you think do I have the power to do that?"* (P18). Whilst it could be suggested that by considering herself as an intern, she had transitioned through liminality away from her student identity, there is an incapacity or hesitation regarding decision-making. Odio (2021) and Garsten (1999) suggest that internships may leave participants feeling powerless because of their transitory role and low status. Whilst this was rarely observed in this study, the lack of supervision seems to have contributed to a "limbo" like

state for much of the placement, leaving P18 questioning how she is seen by others (Mele et al. 2021) rather than feeling a professional who belonged in the organisation.

In some organisations, there was a frequent turnover of managers, which then impacted on the supervisor's ability to "give ownership" and fill the gaps in the WPS knowledge.

P5 worked for in a branch of an international organisation. His supervisor changed on three occasions due to staff turnover, which had an impact on his understanding of the job role and his development of job-related PO:

"What I really needed at that point was a manager to go, "this is what you can do next in terms of the build-up of tasks" you learn and do one task and you expand it…after Christmas, I got a manager who was really good at educating in terms of this is, this is the business and basically learning and teaching the employees and he was really good at that." P5

Whilst the WPS felt confident in some tasks, in areas where he had less self-efficacy, his development slowed, and he became frustrated and then bored. A new supervisor facilitated building job-related knowledge, which resulted in self-efficacy, eventually resulting in indications of both job and organisational PO. He was however left considering what might have been and before the end of his placement was considering a new career direction on graduation.

Finally, the PDAs highlighted how often supervisors were themselves often in their first managerial role and so were learning the managerial ropes themselves. PDA1 suggested that this was now becoming a more frequent cause of miscommunication:

> *"The companies will let the managers cut their teeth and get their first management experience on a student, um, and that can be really difficult because if the manager doesn't quite know what they're doing in everything as well, the student doesn't quite know what they're doing, then automatically there's this clash" PDA1*

Employer 2 concurred, suggesting early in her career, she found it challenging to know how best to manager a WPS: *"I just had no idea how to delegate, wasn't sure what I should be doing versus what was I allowed"* (E2). Nonetheless, at the most basic level, poor communication or inconsistent delegation may leave the WPS struggling to complete tasks correctly. Yet, if ownership is not clearly given and permissioned, it can leave the WPS in limbo, lacking the confidence or expertise to know how to manage the situation. P15 had two different managers and could see the contrast:

> *"XXX, there's less of that delegation, there's more of that participation in terms of how do we work best together because I don't feel like she has a clear enough sort of strategy and set out to give that delegation down" P15*

In conclusion, this study highlights how supervisors / mentors played a crucial part in the development of job-related ownership in the early career participants of this study. A supervisor who "gives" ownership, provides challenging work alongside coaching and socio-psychological support (trust, helping the development of a professional self) seems important to help facilitate early feelings of ownership. This study highlights elements of social construction in job-related PO and recommends further work to be undertaken to consider how social interaction by supervisors/leaders may impact the development of PO in staff members. In particular, understanding how this process of "giving" ownership may play out at other levels in organisations.

This section has briefly indicated that organisational culture also plays a role in this process, and this will now be discussed in more detail.

4.2.2 Organisational Culture

There has been some research relating to the way in which PO might manifest in individualist and collectivistic cultures (Peng and Pierce 2015; Wang et al. 2018), however, far fewer studies have considered how PO is nested within an organisational context and therefore the role of organisational culture in the development of PO (Dawkins et al. 2017). The findings from this study indicate that organisational culture plays an important and significant role in PO

development with supervisors then facilitating this culture to early career professionals.

Within this study, there were some organisations who embedded ownership in their culture, which was communicated to the WPS by the previous incumbent, supervisors, and other team members. WPS 4,5, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20, all gave examples of an ownership culture. P5 suggested that from day one he was aware of his responsibilities and that the organisational culture encouraged individual problem solving, self-management and autonomy, as well as taking responsibility. *"I don't think I had a choice of deciding where I'm going to own this...from day one…it was drummed into me."* P5

Participant 19 looked for organisations that provided work placements with a great deal of responsibility, although was surprised when he was asked to be the European lead on the weekly global strategy call, whilst his manager went on holiday during the second week of his placement. When asking for support, he was told that people generally learnt from experience. *"I'd much rather you jump in at the deep end, learn the hard way, and then going forwards you'll benefit."* (comment from line manager, recounted by P19). Ownership was given and employees were expected to be accountable and so he accepted and cultivated ownership at this early stage, aware that he had a 'safety net'. This was a similar experience to P12, 14, 15 and P20, who worked for Employer 2:

> *"I'd like to think we really push them and we really enable them to have ownership because we … it's not sink or swim but it's … we will like throw you in and your safety net is down there but basically go off and make your mistakes" E2*

and also suggested by E3 *"encourage them to run with it, but knowing that at all times, I am there to support them"* (E3).

As mentioned previously, this specific group of WPS working at E2 were given ownership over their workloads, their time, their calendars, and deadlines. This provided them considerable opportunities to take control, craft and invest themselves in the various building blocks that joined together to form their overarching job role. P12 ran assessment centre days and was given overall responsibility for them: *"I loved the responsibility of it, I loved running the day and I felt in control"* (P12).

Control has been posited as a key PO route (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004) and will be discussed further in the "taking ownership" section. However, whilst this study concurs, organisational culture and supervisors were also crucial in facilitating opportunities for control, such as the example above and what Liu et al. (2012) describes as a self-managing team climate (in which individuals have autonomy, discretion, and independence). Pierce et al. (2004) research suggested control mediates the work environment structure (technology, autonomy and participative decision making). However, I would contest that it is organisational culture which really embeds PO in an organisation and the work environment structure relates to part of "how" organisations implement this. E2 provides an example below suggesting how ownership is ritually embedded in appraisals within the organisation, not just for WPS, but beyond this to their full-time staff:

> *"So they are constantly being tasked with noting down when they've taken ownership for things…it's very much you start with those competencies, but they still follow you through and they're still things we talk about with them, and myself, years later." E2*

P2, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19 and P20 all worked in organisations where they felt that they were 'thrown in the deep end' and were required to learn by their mistakes. However, most crucially, these were environments where individuals mainly felt supported (P5 less so, due to supervisor turn over). They were granted the autonomy and freedom to manage their work and themselves, but they were also encouraged to ask questions, make mistakes and to learn independently.

"they did really chuck a lot of responsibility on you in the first day and the second day, they sort of it was sort of how did you get on? …So one aspect, it's chucking you in at the deep end and second aspect is sort of honing your skills nice and early and so straightaway, you're teaching yourself how to do things." P5

Whilst a sink or swim mentality may not suit all individuals, for those with greater self efficacy, it proved the quickest way to develop ownership and a new professional identity.

The WPS in these organisations did develop early ownership feelings, particularly for their job role, which was an attractive, open, accessible and manipulatable target (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004). These individuals also tended to exhibit self-efficacy within their environment and wanted to take control, *"I kind of thrive off autonomy as well"* (P4). Therefore, both organisational support in being "given ownership" and having WPS who developed early self-efficacy helped develop the confidence to accept this form of working. Employer 2 emphasised that they hired the sort of individuals who could manage this form of self-ownership and therefore the selection process may be crucial as a means of assessing suitability to these workplaces.

Nevertheless, as individuals experience a liminal period from the start of their WP, it was still a period of identity–change, bringing uncertainty and self-questioning. Those organisations with strong ownership cultures helped facilitate this process by providing structure, support and clarity, *"So we're encouraging them to ask for the help"* (E3).

P19 suggested he was immediately treated as an employee who had a voice within the organisation *"we are not viewed as students...We are all viewed as employees and…. have an equal voice." (*P19), which was a sentiment shared by other participants such as P2, P4, P12 and P15. Employee voice and participation in decision-making have been suggested to have a positive relationship with organisational PO (Pierce et al. 2004; Chi and Han 2008; Avey et al. 2012; Li et al. 2012), possibly because it allows individuals to feel that they are the causes of such changes (Pierce and Jussila 2011) and this study concurs. Morewedge (2021) suggests attachments are stronger when linked to social identity and by being "given" ownership; the WPS felt part of the team. Whilst a 'sink or swim' company culture may not suit all individuals, for those with self-efficacy it seemed the quickest way to develop a professional identity and develop job-related PO:

Role-modelling was also encouraged in a number of organisations (P1,3,4,12, 14, 15, 19, 20) with 'lunch and learn' or opportunities to request a 'coffee meet up' with more senior staff. P1 worked for an IT organisation and was initially concerned about his lack of technology know-how. However, he learnt that the

company culture facilitated growth: “it’s a real ‘learn a tool’ culture, not a ‘know-it-all' culture” (P1), which gave him the confidence to try out new technologies. Whilst some of these events were as much about the WPS exploring career options and building knowledge of roles and responsibilities, there was frequently a more subtle form of rites of renewal, socialisation or cultural integration, which built a sense of belonging and as well as organisational role-modelling. For organisations trying to build talent pipelines, this seemed effective on several levels, from building an immediate sense of belonging and strengthening social structures to providing ‘future selves’ (Markus and Nurius 1986) and career paths. P15 felt highly motivated after a talk from a VP within the organisation. The level of appreciation for someone at that level proved to be hugely gratifying and motivational and built that sense of belonging suggested to be important as part of the integration process (Gennep 2013) and taking it beyond the team to feelings for the organisation:

> *“when you have people like that…it motivates you…you think…I've got something in this company*” (P15).

Such events, including onboarding and one-to-one opportunities for engagement, highlight the biographical nature of an organisation in a comparable way that we have with our possessions. Organisational stories and experiences are shared with interns to transfer the essence of the organisation or department. The WPS then add their own experiences, thus building and developing the biography of an organisation (Kleine et al. 1995; Watkins et al. 2015). E1A talked about an Alumni board that the WPS built to demonstrate that history of their team, emphasising their individual and collective identities and how this can also develop a sense of belonging:

“they set up their own little Alumni board. They gave themselves all nicknames…XXX was Kindness Guru and XXX… oh, he was Green wasn’t it? He was Sustainability Guru…So it was like they were building their own little community really”. E1A

Whilst this is also simultaneously a form of “taking” ownership, it does demonstrate the importance of that sense of belonging for some individuals and

that strong desire to feel part of something which will be discussed further in the "taking ownership section." Moreover, by ascribing titles to each other, they are upholding each other's identities (Holmes 2015) and anchoring identities within the team or department.

Working for an organisation with a strong ownership culture and being "given" ownership did also seem to assist attachments beyond the job role to other organisational targets, such as the team and the organisation itself. Those working at Employer 2 (P12,14,15 and 19) all suggested returning to the organisation after graduation

Nonetheless, whilst some of the organisations did display a culture of ownership, at times there were situations that occurred which inevitably impacted on the WPS. As mentioned previously, P5 had several different supervisors across the year and periods of no supervision. Whilst initially he felt able to take ownership because he was supported, when this support disappeared, his feelings of ownership at times reduced, because he did not have the knowledge or skills required to move to the next level "*What I really needed… was a manager "this is what you can do next in terms of the build-up of tasks" P5*

P10 worked in various retail branches and had a particularly poor experience in one branch during a branch rotation. Feeling unsupported working with a team who she felt were setting her impossible challenges, she reflected, *"That was horrible. They were so hard on me" (P10). I*t was only when she moved locations that she felt in control and perceived organisational support (Pierce et al. 2001; Zhang 2020). P2 suggested within his SME that whilst he perceived ownership across the organisation, some teams demonstrated more ownership than others, with the Project Management team protecting their projects as if it was *"their baby".*

E1a did not believe that her organisation had an ownership culture: *"if it was cultural…I think you'd see it in all staff and I don't…think I see it in all staff." (E1a),* yet paradoxically believed the WPS felt differently, because it was "*their XXX" (E1A).* As I have already referred to the student-initiated alumni board, it does feel as though ownership was felt by the WPS involved in the creation of this board. From the participant's interview (P5), however, I would suggest that

ownership was embedded in the department and so the behaviour in the team and via the outgoing WPS meant that there was a microculture of ownership, "*we did the handover through the students… the previous student embedded it in the new student" (*E1). It seems plausible that if ownership is not embedded throughout an organisation, there may be pockets of ownership behaviour coming through departments and teams. However, this area needs to be further researched to consider organisational culture and PO in more detail.

P13 suggested ownership felt embedded in some departments who had autonomy within the team, but not within his own team., although this was mainly due to the relationship with his supervisor, *"I think she was very stubborn and umm didn't like other people's ideas"* (P13), which will be discussed further in the coming section. P6 did not demonstrate many examples of workplace ownership within his department. However, his organisation ran "Kaizen" events, which is a form of continuous improvement. People could come up with an idea and individuals volunteer to be part of a project team to develop the idea. This form of ownership is neither solely job- nor organisation-related PO, but does demonstrate a form of ownership, although the boundaries of the target are not completely clear.

In another example, P8 worked for an organisation where there had been a quick organisational growth and organisational directors were keen to establish new values. She noticed a change in culture during the duration of the placement, *"it felt like a completely different company at the end to the company that I started with"* (P8). The change of culture also moved from one where interns were not valued "she's the intern, she can do it"… that kind of stigma attached to it" (P8), to one where the CEO expressed an interest in intern programmes. This, in her eyes, resulted in being given ownership of tasks and projects in a way that wasn't possible at the start of the work placement. Luckily this WPS grew alongside the cultural changes herself and ultimately felt valued by the organisation.

Overall, the participants of this study indicate organisational culture to be a key element in facilitating ownership in individuals at the start of their career:

> *"I don't think as a staff member can actually fully take ownership, unless it is given as well by management, you know, because it's the*

kind of thing in a working environment with is a pretty much two-way street." PDA2

In particular when WPS were given responsibility for the entirety of their job role, including where and how they work, it allowed those individuals looking for responsibility to blossom. They generally developed ownership feelings for the whole role, rather than just tasks and with early PO development more common. However, this research stresses the importance of support, which links to the notion of safety (Zhang 2020). If organisations do not consider fully the mechanisms to support these early career professionals, there is a chance that they stop learning and developing or lose their confidence. Many of these individuals still needed a support mechanism in place and/or a supported "sink or swim" mentality, where mistakes were encouraged.

To conclude, those organisations who embed job-related ownership within their culture provide their WPS and other staff opportunities, which not only benefit the job role, but also the company. Nevertheless, further research needs to be undertaken to consider this in other organisational settings with other groups of employers. For researchers, this could however be a fruitful area of further study.

4.3 Trust

The third key element in this study, which facilitated "giving" ownership, was for individuals to feel trusted when undertaking their job role. As new employees working in their first professional job role, it was a quite different experience to prior work experience in part-time job roles. P2 explained what he perceived to be the difference:

"There's two different types of way of working, one is basically, you get told what to do, you clock in, clock out and that's it. And there's another model… I'm in now is where… what it is, you're given an aim to achieve, and you have to go about it" P2

This change in working practice is exhilarating, but can be nerve-inducing and feeling trusted by those giving tasks was crucial, due to the initial fear factor felt

by many participants, *"I've been…left to run meetings, something that I was really scared about doing at the beginning"* (P16). Trust relies on an individual being vulnerable to another without fear of their intentions and behaviours (Rousseau et al '98, Mayer et al '95). These early career starters were already vulnerable because of their lack of workplace experience and understanding of how "work works", but confidence and feelings of being trusted built over time *"So yeah, the more trust and the longer I have been there, the more I understand what's going on" (P16)*

Within those organisations where an ownership culture was embedded (4,5, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 19, 20), trusting staff to complete their work was generally the norm. The "building block" approach employed by many organisations allowed supervisors to demonstrate trust in their new charges and to help their new employees understand the business environment with which they were now operating. Initially, small tasks were completed before the WPS was given increased responsibility and was trusted to complete the work in the way that best suited them, *"that post three months…I trust they can do things without needing me to check everything" (E2).* WPS felt as if they were tested by their supervisors and if they took responsibility for a small task, then this was a building block to being permissioned larger, more complex tasks:

> *"slowly she started showing me signs that she wanted to push me to the point that I feel comfortable in just going to her and saying, I would like to do this." P11*

Brown et al. (2014b) recognise the interpersonal nature of trust and it was also clear in this study that the supervisors who signalled trust were more likely to be rewarded with early job-related PO from their WPS. P14 spoke about how she got to a point where she was autonomous:

> "my managers just kind of expect me to be getting on with my job – I don't have to tell them what I'm doing every time I do a task… they trust me to do it." P14

For WPS to build confidence and trust to accept ownership, the PDAs suggested that the WPS needed to be within a structured, supportive environment where they were given responsibility, but also provided with clear ownership guidelines which also included feedback, *"I think ownership also comes from good feedback from managers as well"* (PDA1). This links to the work of Zhang (2020) whose meta-analysis of PO research suggested safety was a key PO antecedent. Safety consists of four components (organisational justice, trust, perceived organisational support and relational closeness) and whilst trust was most strongly identified in this research, both organisational support and relational closeness were observed as part of the "giving ownership" mentality.

Trust did allow the WPS to feel safe to complete job role tasks, because it demonstrated their supervisor's confidence in their abilities, which spurred them on to undertake increasingly more complex tasks and own their job role:

> *"because I don't think my manager would have trusted me if she didn't think that I could have handled that…..So the whole process, she was there with me, but it wasn't handholding…that was definitely a step for me to then be able to do bigger things later because I felt like, okay, she trusted me with this" P11*

Olckers and Enslin (2016a) study of participants in professional services in South Africa found a positive correlation between PO and workplace trust and in particular trust in the organisation. The participants from this study also indicated the role of organisational culture influencing the level of trust given to WPS. Employer 3 felt that trust was key to make WPS feel that they were valued:

> *"just let them get on with it, because if we've chosen them right..they're going to be listened to, they see that the work is valued, they see that they can contribute, it's pretty much my work here is done, just let them get on with it and gently guide." E3*

Nevertheless, whilst an ownership culture tended to embed trust, supervisory trust often only came with experience, as mentioned by Employer 2, who suggested that it took a few years of supervision before she had the confidence to trust those working for her. This view was also expressed by the PDAs who, as previously mentioned, suggested first-time supervisors were given a WPS as

the first person they would manage. PDA 1 suggested a lack of trust manifesting in micro-managing was noticeably common in "millennial" managers, although this may also be due to the new supervisor being desperate to succeed. PDA1 suggested the number of managers who struggled with delegating the current cohort of WPS *"probably about six or seven, and they've been more micromanagers"* (PDA1).

Certainly, those WPS with experienced supervisors (P1,2, 4, 7, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15 and 19) felt more noticeably trusted by their supervisors *"She was very, very liberal, she allowed me to just do everything"* (E11), although this was not true in all instances (P3 and P13). E13 struggled with his supervisor because whilst ownership was often given, he perceived that there were always boundaries around this ownership resulting in little trust or interpersonal closeness. The "giving" of ownership came with caveats and was more akin to lending, causing doubts in the WPS mind, limiting their self-efficacy and ultimately affecting their level of ownership:

"It was always a bit difficult…my Manager had already preconceived ideas about what needed to be done and when but wouldn't tell me what it was and when it was to be done for." P13

There was a strong perception of unfairness related by P13 suggesting that a lack of interpersonal and procedural justice can inhibit opportunities to develop PO (Chi and Han 2008). Trust has an element of the past in that our experiences shape our future trusting behaviour (Rousseau et al. 1998) and P13's experience is almost the opposite of P11. Where P11's confidence grew, because she felt trusted and safe, P13's confidence eroded, "*Umm, I was confident at the beginning, but then the confidence sort of dipped*" (P13) and the relationship suffered, never to recover. Ownership was therefore sporadic, occasionally given, but more frequently borrowed with hidden caveats *"What I struggled with is that you really had to be careful asking a question of how to do something or umm putting forward an idea" (P13).* The essence of the "giving ownership" process had become contaminated (Rozin et al. 1989; Argo et al. 2006; Kramer and Block 2014).

P3's story has similarities in that both WPS experienced a lack of interpersonal trust with their supervisor and in both instances, others in the

organisation acknowledged challenging supervisory behaviour, *"My line manager was particularly, (pause) he, loads of people say… he can be very strange"* (P3) and

"previous intern said…might come back five or ten times umm but wouldn't tell me how to do it right" (P13). P3 showed a great deal of ownership in a previous part time role and talks about the differences between that role and her work placement role in relation to PO:

> *"I've always been able to go that extra mile, see something that needs to be done…to be changed and just do it. And they've encouraged me and empowered me...I don't think I've always had that here. It's it's been a lot of hand holding..I get that ownership there. If I want to do something, they trust me to go and do it" (P3)*

The key differences relate to that of interpersonal safety and trust, but because of this, there are no opportunities to try out the role to see if it fits resulting in a limbo like state.

Brown et al. (2014a) suggested whilst there are many positives to forming high trust environments, there may be occasions when individuals engage in territorial behaviour that impact on team dynamics. Whilst there was little evidence of territorial behaviour found in this study, P10 did suggest that because of previous experiences of group-work at university, she was used to claiming and withholding knowledge, *"it's not like you're in first year of uni where people don't care"* (P10). She initially continued this behaviour in the workplace before realising that she needed to trust other's capabilities.

The biographies of our previous ownership experiences have implications for future psychological ownership, and therefore those who have been less inclined to trust in the past may need role modelling and support on how to build trust in a different environment. In addition, organisations need to consider who best to line-manage early career professionals, as their trust behaviour can have a significant impact on an early career professional's opportunity to develop PO.

To conclude, this study builds our understanding of the role trust may play in PO development and in particular its role in "giving" ownership alongside the influence of the supervisor and organisational culture. As these study

participants are early career professionals, trust may be more significant for PO development than for other, more experienced employees, although given the outcomes of previous studies (Brown et al. 2014a; Olckers and Zyl 2016; Knapp et al. 2019; Zhang 2020) trust and organisational safety may always be crucial in the giving ownership relationship.

“Giving” ownership to WPS relates to the clear permissioning of ownership in facilitating the development of job-related PO. This study’s results suggest the importance of three key elements that expedite this process alongside the relational element of PO, which has often been missing from many previous PO studies. The importance of these elements seems crucial to the development of PO in these early career professionals. However, it could also be contended that these elements can play an important part in the development of employees PO at any level. Whilst the permissioning element may be of less importance to experienced staff, the active relational process of “giving” ownership to employees via the organisational culture and through supervisors and leaders could be an important signalling tool aiding effective communication. Nevertheless, there also needs to be interpersonal justice and organisational safety (Knapp et al. 2019; Zhang 2020) mainly in the form of trust, to quickly develop an individual’s confidence to build job-related ownership.

The themes in this study are interconnected and so the picture of PO development will continue to be shaped in the coming sections of this chapter, displaying a complex tapestry of feelings relating to PO.

4.4 Theme Two: "Taking Job-related Ownership"

Theme two considers the second element of this relational ownership process, that of "taking ownership", which related to PO of the job role. How this may then influence organisational PO will be discussed in section 4.5.4. The analysis of data from this study indicates two forms of ownership being taken. One form is an acceptance of being "given" ownership by a supervisor, mentor, or team member and how that facilitates future opportunities to take ownership. The second form is when ownership has not been offered, but the WPS decides to take ownership, nevertheless. Both forms are active, relational and rely on suggested opportunities to fulfil one or more motive, access to PO routes and personal factors, and PO target attributes.

Pierce et al. (2003) suggested that whilst individuals may quickly recognise a target as "theirs", there is an interactive, lengthy process to develop full cognitive and affective feelings of attachment. Although no guidance was given on their definition of "lengthy", they suggest that PO emerges at the confluence of at least one of the posited routes (control, intimate knowledge and investing self) with target attributes (visibility, attractiveness, accessibility, and malleability) and individual factors, such as traits and values (Pierce et al 2003; Pierce and Brown, 2020). However, beyond these assertions, no studies have developed, concurred, or disagreed with this original notion, and therefore this research provides a more definitive starting point which future studies can build on. The following sections will consider posited PO routes (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Zhang 2020; Morewedge 2021) which expediated "taking" ownership by this group of early career professionals. This section will then discuss the two forms of "taking" ownership in more detail.

4.5 Control

This study's results concur with previous studies regarding the importance of the control route in contributing to the development of job-related PO (Pierce et

al. 2001, 2003; Liu et al. 2012). Nevertheless, there were some notable differences which allude to the complexity of PO in different contexts. In this study, ownership permission allowed WPS to take control, which as new employees they were not all used to doing in the workplace. P12 provides a typical response to the differences in control from a work placement to a previous part time job:

> *"Every week…no one was saying do this, do that…Whereas at XXX… okay you're on this section, you're doing this tonight and you'll do that. I was directed more" (P12)*

Permissioning and trust were very important in WPS feeling able to take control of tasks which organisations and supervisors managed in different ways. In organisation 2, P12,14,15 and 19 were expected to take control via the supported "sink or swim" method. Li et al. (2012) discuss control as a building block to PO, but in this study, the array of responses suggests that whilst control is important, other routes, such as opportunities to invest self, safety and self-congruity, as well as confidence, also play a part.

P15 liked opportunities to take control and get involved, so from the moment that control was given, he took control and developed his job role considerably:

> *"I think I've been able to give it my own, like, twang, if you like... to have a bit more freedom…some people like to report into quite a lot saying, is it okay to do this… I probably should do it more than I do, but I just quite like to go about stuff" P15*

This was a participant who actively wanted to control and invest himself to give the role his own stamp. Safety was less crucial to him and when ownership was permissioned, he took it. His line manager (E2) was a great admirer, suggesting she had seen his potential during the recruitment process, and he didn't disappoint, *"Whereas he's only five months in now and he is outstanding"* (E2). In contrast, P14 who worked in the same team, initially borrowed ownership, having some hesitancy around permissioning, which did seem to relate to confidence:

"I would be telling umm my…Manager…when I was working from home, or umm updating them when I'd completed a task and I kind of realised that all they said was, oh that's great. They kind of didn't really need to know" (P14)

A number of other WPS such as P6,16, 17 and 18 were similarly lacking in self-efficacy initially, but the differences in strength of ownership between P14 and P15 felt significant. P14 suggested that by the placement mid- point, she had a great deal of control and enjoyed the level of autonomy and feelings of trust:

"I would say I very much do have control…I don't have to tell them what I'm doing every time I do a task or when I've finished it, they trust me to do it…there's a lot of freedom with how I work and when I do the tasks…where I work as well, I didn't have to be here today, technically I could work from home." P14

Ultimately, P15 seemed to "take" ownership of the job role, pushing the boundaries and 'job crafting' (a topic to be discussed in S4.4) , as far as he was able to: *"anything to do with recruitment in XXX… I feel responsible.. (thumps the table)"* (P15), Conversely, it seemed as if P14 was happy to control within her job-role parameters, but, whilst she developed job-related PO, there didn't seem to be a strength of ownership feelings nor the desire to craft that was perceived in other WPS. Pierce and Jussila (2011) suggest that boundary conditions such as individualism/collectivism, job involvement and organisational self-esteem demonstrate the differences between individuals, and this study partly concurs that job involvement may be important. Nevertheless, it could also be surmised that P15's self-worth is linked to work. Therefore, it feels that many factors play a part in these individual differences and it is the opinion of the author that it is this complexity that needs to be better understood by theorists.

Whilst most individuals were permissioned some form of control, the differences between some contexts were stark. P10 worked for an organisation that stated in their recruitment process that their placement would be tough. In this instance, permission wasn't granted in an obvious way, rather there seemed to

be a deliberate policy, which required WPS to seize opportunities and take control:

> *"we would be told what to do…if you want to change something, or you want to say… would you mind, if I don't watch you today, I'd like to go and do it myself. You can but you almost that, you have to want it. They won't just really give you all the opportunities because they want to see if you're going to get them yourselves. P10*

This organisational culture was different to most, but for participants such as P10, they understood expectations in advance and wanted that sort of challenge even if at the start of the placement this seemed particularly demanding (this was the WPS, who went home and cried for the first week of her placement). At the other end of the spectrum was P13 (discussed in the trust section), who had some control, but did not feel trusted. In this instance, the "giving" of ownership proved to come with caveats and was more akin to lending, causing doubts in the WPS mind, limiting their self-efficacy and ultimately affecting their level of ownership. Taking ownership was challenging because:

> *"I think she was very stubborn and umm didn't like other people's ideas…f something was suggested, she'd say, no, not doing that. So yeah, it was difficult" P13*

This indicated a "limbo"-like situation, second-guessing expectations and unable to take control and invest self in his work. For those individuals at the start of their career, the ownership game in the workplace can be akin to learning ownership rules as a toddler. If a child is given a toy by an older child, but then has it snatched back from them, they become wary and confused. If normative ownership requirements are not clear in a working situation, a certain element of wariness may develop, making it more challenging for some

individuals to accept or take control in further instances, especially if they lack self-efficacy.

The PO route of control has been mainly considered from its technical elements, such as work environment structure, which includes technology and job design. What this study suggests is the social element between supervisors and team members who permission and/or show trust to the WPS in allowing them control of tasks and their job role. This perspective has not been considered in detail in previous PO research and whilst it may seem more pertinent to some employee groups, especially those at the start of their career, any situations where work demarcations are not clear, or where "giving and trusting" are not aligned with PO routes, individuals seem less likely to "take" ownership.

4.6 Investing Self in Target

Investing self is the second PO route allowing an individual to cultivate, shape and invest psychic energy into the target, until it feels as if it is part of them (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003).

PDA1 discussed how three months into the start of the placement, when she undertook her first company visits, some students were already investing themselves into their tasks:

> *"the good ones, the ones that are already sort of like, identifying... "this process seems to be taking a lot longer, what if we change that we could do that a lot quicker"" PDA1*

Once again, the indications were that "giving ownership" facilitated the process by giving permission to WPS that they could invest themselves into job-related

targets such as tasks, projects, or the entire role. P11 talks about this permissioning and the freedom to invest herself in her job role:

> *"I think it all goes to the management, so it's all about … how much freedom you're given to carry on your own projects. Not just your own projects but the way that you carry on a specific task and everything." P11*

One way that some organisations helped facilitate this self-investment was by providing the WPS with a personal project, which was often open-ended in terms of scope. P4 discussed how that freedom can then build greater self-investment: *"the social impact stuff because I really invested myself into it and I really cared for it"* (P4)

This refers to behavioural commitment and the importance of ownership by choice (Brehm 1956; Harmon-Jones and Mills 1999; Ye and Gawronski 2016a). If workers and especially early career professionals can choose additional elements to work on, such as a project, this can help construct self-investment in the job role as it builds self-congruity (Morewedge 2021). Nevertheless, ownership by choice is also about control and it feels that it is the entwining of control and self-investment that is important in the "taking" of ownership in this group of participants:

> *" XXX basically took the PMB report off me and that was it. He said, is it alright if I just smarten it up a bit. I said, do what you want and within the first month I was like, wow where does this come from." E1A*

One again however, it should be made clear that self-investment and other PO routes are facilitated by individuals, such as the supervisor or via an organisational culture, which provides these opportunities that allow individuals to feel trusted and safe. Ownership is being constructed between individuals giving and taking ownership, rather than a PO route magically opening by itself.

4.7 Self-Congruity

Self-congruity links to the mere and endowment effects (Heider 1958; Beggan 1992) whereby individuals look favourably on objects they own, due to the

psychological attachment made. Morewedge (2021) suggests that this attachment is stronger when the object links to an individual's social identity. As a recently suggested PO route, there are no comparison studies available. Nevertheless, there were examples of self-congruity which suggest that is should be investigated further.

As mentioned in the "giving" ownership section, results from this study indicate the self-congruity route may start for some during the recruitment process, when the WPS build that psychological attachment to the organisation, by firstly making a choice to apply and by then receiving positive feedback from the organisation. This may come from being taken further through the selection process, but also via shared experiences at the interview and assessment centre. P7 demonstrates how self-congruity was developed during this period and how she started to look more favourably towards an organisation that showed interest in her application:

> *"I kind of thought…that it would be as a backup…he said if I wanted to come to the office and look around…and when I went in there…I was actually more interested in this role than I was in the XXX role and XXX role. Because he gave me a much more personalised experience like, whereas like XXX…obviously it's all via email and stuff but it is very much all on their terms...I felt a little bit more like kind of valued." P7*

Most students were relieved to receive an offer, even if it wasn't from their initial preferred organisation. In the same way that (Sartre 1956) suggests that buying objects can be an act of creation, because energy has been invested, the psychic energy invested in an organisation's selection process, alongside the act of saying yes, may facilitate the early feelings of self-congruency, especially if the role or the organisation links with the student's self-worth (Ferraro et al. 2011; Ye and Gawronski 2016a). Research into PO routes has not focussed on this early stage, but further research into the selection process may provide clarity on the starting point of PO routes.

Once in a job role, the Mere effect (Beggan 1992) may influence how individuals consider their role and if the WPS believe it is congruent with their identity, they may form a positive opinion of it. P11 initially felt more interest in another intern's role at the start of her placement, but over time adjusted her opinion:

> *"And then for the role I think, initially when I first saw it, I really liked my colleague's role because she was doing UK specifics, so she got to do a lot of events and actually go to the events. Now having finished, my opinion of that has changed." P11*

Investing in a role shapes our perception and the combination of self-investment and controlling tasks is likely to strengthen such feelings. But what if an individual is less interested in a role? P4 struggled to settle initially into the organisation, but involving himself in a community project, and speaking to his supervisor regarding his interests, *"my eyes kind of wavering over to, to, to being customer facing"* (P4) facilitated self-congruity, which then helped activate the sense of place / home and self-efficacy motives (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004). Nonetheless, not all WPS experienced the self-congruity route and some, such as P3, whilst developing ownership feelings for her project, were unable to use them as a bridge to job-related or organisational PO.

P6 found his role via a friend and so did not have to invest as much effort into the recruitment process as others, and in fact was *"a bit sceptical but I thought it would be good to see what it would actually be like in an actual job"* (P6). A combination of a busy supervisor, a slight change to the job role and being left to fend for himself resulted in little self-congruence with the role or the company, nor the opportunity to invest himself. Only a project towards the end of the placement gave him the feeling that he had contributed anything of value:

> *"some of the jobs that I was doing…it seems like a waste of time and I, I don't think at times people took it seriously. But then other times when I like with that productivity data, umm you know, people were actually towards the end…were taking more, let's say, seriously and it was good to kind of get that side across." (P6)*

By his own admission, this project was his main example of ownership and ultimately, this experience came too late to build sufficient attachment, and he seemed unsatisfied with the placement experience.

Confidence and self-efficacy also seem to play a role in self-congruity. If individuals perceived themselves as efficacious, they were more likely to be able to deal with challenges, such as a supported 'sink or swim' scenario, because they would allow themselves to deal with such situations as P2 did. Getting through hurdles built self-confidence, but also helped develop self-congruity:

> *"Umm a big thing for me as well is confidence…As I said I have never been in this scenario before and to be not chucked into the deep end, but after a couple of months I was in a bit uncomfortable situation, but it's all for the better." (P2)*

4.8 Intimate Knowledge of the Target

Intimate knowledge is the third route to PO suggested by Pierce and colleagues (2001, 2003; 2004) reflecting coming to know a target intimately. Given the limited time these WPS were in the workplace, combined with the implication that a longer time was required to undertake this route (Pierce et al. 2003), prior to the study, this felt like a less accessible route. Nevertheless, when combined with other routes (including self-congruity) and having been permissioned and trusted to take ownership, this route was utilised by some WPS to anchor themselves into the job role, although to a lesser degree than other routes.

P17 became the company's 'go-to' person for certain processes, due to his high level of Excel skills, which allowed him to modify some processes:

> *"in a sense, responsibility fell on me in the workplace and I sort of owned that section of what we do…and that was my forte (laughs) So, yeah, after those two months, that was the point where I sort of said, I own this*

process, I do this and that and that…So yeah, it feels like I've become part of the office's history almost." P17

Becoming the expert in a certain area allowed him intimate knowledge of his job role, but also helped his feelings of belonging towards the organisation. Brown et al. (2014b) suggest that intimate knowledge can help satisfy the "sense of home" motive and whilst this wasn't widely seen in this study, this WPS equated ownership with belonging and so it was obviously important to him. P2, 4, 8, 11, 12 and 15 all demonstrated intimate knowledge of the job role and generally this resulted in them being seen as the "expert" in a particular area. P2 for example, was bought into a small organisation as a project manager, but took over the company's social media. Whilst initially he had not perceived this area as one with particular skills, he was far more confident with it than other employees and so "took" ownership of this area. He found he really enjoyed this part of the role and was able to invest himself into this area to a greater degree than his project management role, where there were other project managers with far more expertise.

Nonetheless, there were perceived downsides to individuals whose level of "intimate knowledge" was conceivably greater than other staff members, including their supervisor. P12 joined a department that was going through a number of changes, in a role managing early talent recruitment. Joining the department a couple of months before her new supervisor, she demonstrated control, competence and intimate knowledge of the role, to the point that the client came solely to her, rather than her supervisor:

"she didn't even see herself as my manager for a couple of months. I kept saying to her, you know, you are my manager, you need to tell me what to do. And at the end, I was actually telling her what to do so the responsibility between us, it kind of actually fell more on my shoulders because the client just kept coming to me (emphasis) with issues. So I was actually taking more of her stuff than she was of mine." P12

For WPS who have little experience of "how work works" or managing upwards, having greater knowledge than their manager can prove to be a challenging experience. This instance will be discussed further in the pleasure and pain section.

Pierce et al (2003) suggest that having responsibility for a particular task or job role helps develop feelings of ownership, because individuals are expected to take control and invest themselves in targets. This study concurs and suggests that it is the degree of responsibility, control, opportunity for self-investment and self-congruity which may result in strong ownership feelings, rather than the time period that has been suggested to relate to intimate knowledge of a job role. For example, P15's role included initially working on UK-based events with one very competent supervisor (his words) resulted in events being well established and running seamlessly within the organisation. A few months further into the placement there was an opportunity to work on a similar type of product in EMEA with a less competent manager (again his words), which then allowed him to feel more involved in the target. This opportunity for agency, control, and the investment of self resulted in the rapid development of job-related PO for the EMEA role, whilst feelings of PO never strongly manifested for the UK part of the role:

> *"I guess it's the kind of how much responsibility you feel like you've put into it. So, if something goes wrong in the UK, ultimately, I think maybe XXX could have done something different…But then when an event goes wrong that is me because that is my job and it's in my job description and I should be doing that right."* P15

Consequently, the suggested notion that the longer the time period, the more chance of developing PO (Pierce et al. 2003) negates the importance of attractive, accessible attributes alongside strong control, self-congruity and self-investment routes. In this instance, as well as PO routes such as control and self-investment being available, the fact that the other target was also extremely accessible and perceived as attractive to cultivate, resulted in opportunities to job craft and to entwine self and tasks. That the UK part of the role did not allow him the opportunity to craft and invest self, nor fully control because of his competent supervisor (although this could also be partly contagion or principal possessor related) (Friedman and Neary 2008; Watkins et al. 2015), resulted in him developing less job-related PO for this part of the job role, even though he had a longer time period to develop intimate knowledge: *"I guess it's the kind of, how much responsibility you feel like you've put into it"* (P15).

Therefore, it could be surmised that intimate knowledge of a target may not be as related to a time period (Pierce et al. 2003), but rather relates to an assortment of routes, attributes, values and organisational factors joining together to facilitate the 'perfect mix'. That mix is likely to differ for everyone, suggesting there is not a perfect PO recipe, but rather a collection of ingredients which can be combined in different ways. This makes PO more challenging to pinpoint as PO surveys assess the strength of PO via motives (Avey et al. 2009) or statements, such as "this is MY organisation" (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004) neither of which may be sufficient to ascertain how PO was developed, nor identify the relational factors which encouraged PO development. Further research regarding PO measurements will therefore be beneficial.

4.9 Psychological Safety

Safety is relatively recently posited PO route, which (Zhang 2020) suggests consists of four key elements: trust, organisational justice regarding perceptions of fairness, relational closeness, and perceived organisational support(Zhang 2020). Trust has already been considered in more detail as part of the "giving ownership" section. Nonetheless, there are elements of "taking" ownership which relate to safety.

Being "given" and then "taking ownership has interpersonal connotations bearing similarities to child development and possessions literature, in which the transfer of ownership and being "given ownership" are perceived as social actions (Friedman and Neary 2008; Kim and Kalish 2009; Blake and Harris 2011; Kalish and Anderson 2011; Tatone et al. 2015). Inevitably within social actions trust, fairness, relational closeness, and perceived support will play a part.

Zahid et al. (2019) suggest that organisational justice can influence the development of PO and there were some examples in this study. WPS such as P13 expressed a lack of organisational justice from his manager: *"She formed ideas very quickly and never changed her mind. So that was very difficult." (*P13). He only seemed to develop task-related ownership when he was working

on an individual project, that he had complete control of. Nonetheless, whilst job-related ownership seemed to never be fully formed, because of his supervisor and a lack of organisational justice, trust, and relational closeness, he felt slightly differently about the organisation as a PO target: *"A bit. But not as much as I would like to"* (P13) and still suggested that he felt he had a future in the organisation: *"XXX would be a really good company to work for, not on that team, but….a really good place to go back to"* (P13).

Whilst this was a slightly different case to other participants who also talked about organisational justice, interestingly they often still perceived the organisation positively, even if the perceived injustice related to organisational controls.

P10 was frustrated with the appraisal system, which she felt didn't consider perceived tough marking from some mentors:

"I remember crying twice in my grading…this isn't fair. I'm trying so hard and my store ops director is going to look at this sheet of paper having not seen me do any of this and go, Oh, she's got a three, but XXX got a five when we're being graded by two completely different people with two completely different specifications" (P10)

Nonetheless this perceived injustice did not affect her strong ownership feelings for the organisation: *"I definitely think personally, I feel ownership over it."* (P10), nor her strong desire to return to the organisation. P12, who initially had a challenging job undertaking what had been two positions in the previous year now rolled into one, also blamed her team rather than the organisation for this perceived organisational injustice *"So I was getting slightly annoyed with the team more than the company"* (P12) even though she was aware that they were also overworked. These types of examples were also seen with P3 and 7, seem to relate to distributive and procedural forms of organisational justice (Colquitt and Chertkoff 2002) However, the WPS seem to process them as more interpersonal forms of justice ('shooting the messenger'). This may be due to their position in the organisation, where they may feel remote from a more abstract target such as an organisation or it may be that other distributive elements, such as salary and graduate job opportunities, are more

important at this point and so outweigh any perceived organisational negativities. It does however demonstrate the relational aspect of PO and safety, and so further investigation of this area for early career professionals may be warranted.

Other elements concerning safety relating to perceived organisational support or relational closeness tended to be positive. P17's example is common of those whose desire for a sense of belonging was strong: *"talk to them….getting issues solved….new things set up….it's just a feeling of belonging between everyone"*(P17)

Feelings of safety were important for this group of participants and as a route, it was often aligned to other PO routes and motives being fulfilled. If neglected, it may act as a blocker to PO, whereby routes such as control are inaccessible. As this is a newly-suggested PO route (Zhang 2020) more research is required, especially at different levels of an organisation. It may be that safety is partly context-driven, with those at the start of their career having slightly different experiences, due to their lack of experience in the working world. However, a lack of trust, a perceived lack of justice or organisational support can occur at all levels. Research relating to safety's relationship with other routes would also be beneficial.

4.10 Job Crafting

Pierce et al. (2009b); Peng and Pierce (2015) highlighted the top-down process of job design facilitating job-related PO, but in this study job crafting was indicated by participants to be a more powerful influence on ownership, perhaps because it provides individuals with greater control and opportunities for self-congruity. For P19, missions gave him the opportunity to re-mould the task boundaries within his job role to fit his perceived skills, knowledge, and areas of interest (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). Expansion-orientated job crafting (Naeem et al. 2021) was positively encouraged in this organisation, with the WPS final presentation requiring individuals to demonstrate how they had added value to the organisation, "*do a 10-minute presentation to the Commercial Officer…how we impacted the business" (P19)*

As mentioned previously, some individuals, such as P4, took their job role in a quite different direction to the one initially specified, job crafting both the task and relational boundaries (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001) to suit his interests and skills:

> *"Well, I kind of thrive off autonomy as well because I also don't like people telling me what to do so I like… I like saying you know; this is what we're looking to do...at first it was daunting... I even got to the point where I just messaged my manager and I'd say I've got really good idea…I want to make something like an impact monitor." P4*

Whilst he was responsible for taking ownership boundaries in a different direction via job crafting, he was aided by his supervisor who allowed him a great deal of autonomy and control. Therefore, whilst he had the self-efficacy and confidence to take ownership, she also permissioned job crafting, as well as ownership. P4 did suggest that taking ownership and owning a process from start to finish could be daunting and cause anxiety at times, but the opportunities to invest self, take control, contribute to the business, and feel valued outweighed the negatives in this instance.

Of the suggested forms of job crafting, task crafting was most frequently observed, with all WPS engaging in this form because of a desire to control. Those who suggested the fewest examples of job crafting were individuals such as P3,5, 6, 13,16 and 18. They all provided some job crafting examples, but either the opportunities were less frequently available, such as P6, who asked around other departments to find work at times, *"So that meant I got to do some tasks, which I probably would not have got to do."* (P6), or P18, who felt that the company dictated the way individuals were required to work: *"Umm, not really. We have a certain way of doing things. I've changed a lot of it to make it easier for me"* (P18). Job crafting in this instance played less of an identity-shaping role (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001) with fewer opportunities for self-congruity.

Some participants, such as P2, 7, 9, 14, 17 and 20, either had scope to engage in more task crafting or, in cases such as P14 and P20, were able to choose how they worked. This was the case with P17, who because of his strong Excel

skills, simplified processes with macros, thus demonstrating mastery: *"I write up a load of macros and stuff that automate lots of processes."* (P17). These were individuals who would not naturally push the scope of their roles without permission, but once permissioned were confident to broaden their job role, *" so I've kind of taken charge of that side of things"* (P14)

Examples of cognitive crafting, whereby an individual alters their job role perspective (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001) in a form of meaning-making behaviour, did occur at times. PDA2 talked about a WPS who was struggling with their job role in a printer. The PDA suggested the WPS look at the print room as his own business and show pride in their work, as that would result in further business:

> *"And he saw from a totally different light as to why he was actually there. And I think it helped him a lot. In the end, at the end the meeting he said, you really changed my outlook on business and the way I look at doing business" PDA2*

Others, such as P8, talked about maturing over the year and how their understanding of "how work works" altered their job role perspective. Whilst this may only relate to early career professionals, it did facilitate the taking ownership process in this WPS *"that understanding of… the world of work…I was more understanding….taking in other perspectives of views"* (P8). Cognitive crafting in this instance was related to a change in work identity which is crucial for successfully exiting a liminal phase.

Employer 1a, who in the culture section suggested ownership culture was embedded more with individuals than within the organisation, talked about how each of their three WPS had taken ownership of various tasks each year:

> *"XXX basically took the PMB report off me…He said, is it alright if I just smarten it up a bit. I said, do what you want…I was like, wow where does this come from. XXX took over all the health and safety stuff, he just did new reports, new things all around the rooms…The sustainability award. He just took that on"* E1

This building of a job role biography resulted in each WPS in turn job crafting their placement experience to meet their strengths. P7 was the current WPS, but when comparing her experience to other WPS realised that there was no structure in place to bring the WPS together in a formal placement scheme. She took it upon herself to suggest this idea to her supervisor and once they signalled their acceptance, she met with senior staff in other departments including Human Resources. This resulted in a more formal placement scheme being invested in across the organisation for the following year's WPS: *"we want to change that into a proper scheme"* (P7). This "taking ownership" in an organisation where ownership fluctuated, required the WPS to personally invest psychic energy to create, control and bring enthusiasm to her idea, but resulted in great satisfaction, the feeling of adding value and providing a legacy for her placement:

> *" Getting that set up is definitely one of the achievements…we're starting a new element to XXX that could potentially carry on for the rest of XXX's lifetime. In a way I feel like I left my mark on XXX now when I leave, it's going to be kind of something that I've created still there." P7*

Within this job role, there was the core role which might slightly differ each year depending on projects, but then each WPS took ownership for an area of interest and harnessed their skills via job crafting. This reframing of the job role was emphasised in the handover book that each added to during the divestment process. This ritual of the WPS being able to inform the next WPS allowed them to include information depending on what they believed was important and demonstrates a key form of cognitive job crafting (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001). P7 suggested that where the book had been factually based on the completion of tasks, she had focussed more on business etiquette. The liminal process moving from student to professional identity (from who she was, to who she wanted to be) was reinforced in this ritual:

> "kind of having more of a positive, um, attitude towards things and the way you put yourself across and networking and things like that, I think I've put more of an element of that into my handover." P7

This notion of “me” shows how roles and individuals become entwinned and over a period, each individual adds a small piece of themselves. This handover book is both a moment of pride, a key memory maker, but also allows the individual to positively ‘contaminate’ the role. Contamination is suggested to be a means of integrating possessions into the extended self (Belk 1988; Watkins et al. 2015) and by “taking” ownership individuals did feel able to transfer the essence of the role to become “theirs.” Whilst this need to transfer the soul of a job role was important when both “giving” and “taking” ownership, it seemed particularly important when individuals were replacing a previous WPS. This was not due to WPS feeling that there was negative contamination attached to the role, more of a desire to be part of the heritage of the role and to connect experiences (Kleine et al. 1995; Ahuvia 2005).

Gift giving is also suggested to be a means of extending self (Sartre 1956) and therefore for some, handing over the job role may have similar outcomes, as it cements an individual’s place in the office biography. This may be particularly true for ECPs, as they have had limited opportunities to extend self in this way. Further research is required, but this could be a way in which organisations bind WPS to the company to benefit the graduate talent pipeline.

There were other examples of different forms of job crafting. P19 very strategically developed the relational boundaries within his role. He decided early on to form a strategy whereby he would meet someone more senior for coffee each week and then ask them to introduce him to two further contacts that he could meet. This built a network around him which he was using in both job role and future career crafting and would be considered a “gains” approach of promotion-orientated crafting (Bindl et al. 2019). This relational crafting, combined with task crafting via his missions and skills crafting for his future development, *“always thinking about how our work is going to contribute to….getting back on the grad scheme”* (P19), demonstrates how much job crafting can be taken by some early career professionals. Given that P11, 12 and 15 also demonstrated many forms of expansion-orientated crafting Naeem et al. (2021) and demonstrated high levels of job-related PO, this does suggest some form of connection between job crafting and job-related PO:

"So, my regular day-to-day job; carry it however way I needed to, however there's always areas like, maybe we can look into this and then if the answer is yes, then can I then look into doing it myself, and exploring other areas" P11

Nevertheless, more work needs to be undertaken to ascertain the exact relationship between job crafting and PO. Bindl et al. (2019) suggest that job crafting fulfils a need for relatedness, autonomy and competence, which bear similarities to PO motives and therefore further work concerning how these constructs differ and work together would be beneficial.

Overall, however, once ownership had been given and permissioned to WPS, many used forms of job crafting to systematically take ownership of tasks, relations, and skills, facilitating the development of job-related PO and their emergent identities knowing that they were supported:

"the good ones….identifying maybe..."this process seems to be taking a lot longer, what if we change that we could do that a lot quicker um"…they've got the free range to suggest the ideas to maybe get on and make the processes and changes to- to be proactive as well" PDA1

Nevertheless, E3 also cautioned that decisions needed to be taken by the right individual and WPS needed to understand what ownership was within their realm:

"transference of tasks in an appropriate manner is easy to do, but then people have to understand that. So if something naturally should come to me, it should come to me, no matter what it is" E2

These ownership boundaries are socially constructed and along with permissioning need to be clearly identified. P11 was always aware of these

boundaries and not overstepping them: *"how far you can take it…take into account the other factors like how senior someone is"* (P11).

Overall, the results from this study partly concur with previous studies regarding suggested PO routes, such as control, investing self, self-congruity, intimate knowledge and some elements of safety, such as trust and perceived organisational support (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Zhang 2020; Morewedge 2021). The entwinning of self and the role resulting in job-related PO occurred quicker if ownership has been permissioned and the WPS feels trusted to take control and invest self by changing processes, procedures and/or mindsets. If there is self-congruity with the job role, or it can be crafted to build self-congruity, this also built job-related PO. Those with high levels of self-efficacy feel motivated to take ownership because of their need to demonstrate competence, whilst for others, cognitive crafting linked to their identity and belonging helping build a feeling of "mine" or "ours". Fulfilling PO motives of belonging and identity may also inadvertently help to facilitate 'boundary-hopping' from "student" to "professional" and therefore move through a liminal space (Mele et al. 2021). Whilst further research needs to be undertaken, a tentative conclusion may be that the elements of "giving and taking PO" aids the liminal process, allowing the WPS to build confidence and speed up the transition through to a professional identity. The certainty that the permissioning of ownership brings to WPS takes away some of the boundary 'fuzziness' (Mele et al. 2021) characterised when ownership is not given or there is no demarcation of responsibilities.

Nonetheless, for this group of participants, intimate knowledge of the job role was viewed less frequently than other routes, partly because of the short time the participants spent in the workplace. However, as seen in examples, intimate knowledge can also be achieved by taking absolute control of a piece of work or project. In this instance intimate knowledge refers to the intensity of knowledge, self-congruity, and self-investment that the participants felt towards their job role or tasks, rather than the intimate knowledge that comes to us in the workplace from a long period of time. The attractiveness of the target often related to the chance to manage a certain task or project alone, rather than

working with another individual such as the supervisor. This suggests that PO does not need to be time-bound and other elements, such as PO motives, the process of giving and taking ownership, as well as the attractiveness of the target, may be as important. Of the forementioned targets this study concurs with (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004) that control and investing self are key routes, though self-congruity and trust were also significant. By being offered opportunities to manage a certain task or project alone, rather than working with another individual or through the various forms of job crafting, there was a greater feeling of control and sense of mine.

The following section will consider the many outcomes related to feelings of psychological ownership.

4.11 Theme Three: Pleasure and Pain

Theme three identifies job-related PO outcomes for this group of early career professions. As mentioned previously there is a duality to PO which can on the one side provide very positive job-related PO outcomes for both the WPS and the employer, whilst also causing some negative outcomes which seemingly relate to the strength of job-related PO felt by individuals.

4.11.1 The Pleasurable Side of Job-Related Ownership

Scholars have suggested that experiencing job-related PO can provide pleasure-producing feelings, such as job satisfaction, self-esteem, affective commitment, in-role performance, pro-active work behaviour, joy and job engagement (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Mayhew et al. 2007; Avey et al. 2009; Avey et al. 2012; Knapp et al. 2014; Peng and Pierce 2015; Wang et al. 2018; Zhang 2020; Henssen and Koiranen 2021), which this study concurs with and which will be discussed further below.

Nonetheless, the feelings for ECP have probably been underestimated, as the intensity of delight and pleasure caused by successfully completing tasks far surpass those reported previously: *"Then I would feel really happy….I was like, that was a really great day, what an achievement"* (P12), demonstrating the satisfaction of a job well done (Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Avey et al. 2012). As experienced workers, it is sometimes hard to remember that first time when you worked on a task or a project which took you out of your comfort zone into unknown territory. The exhilaration of taking ownership of something, entwining your own psychic energy and creativity into a piece of work, which more experienced professionals then praise, was well beyond the expectations of these WPS before they joined the workplace. They are still mentally tangling with their own sense of self, regularly moving betwixt and between student and professional identity, and then they are rewarded with the pleasure of successful ownership, *"Yeah, I felt very like wow, this is this is ours. And actually like people are saying it's really good"* (P10).

Henssen and Koiranen (2021) study of CEOs in a family business highlighted the joy of work felt from PO on an individual and collective basis. This study partly concurs with the notion of the 'joy of work', although the perspectives and influences were quite different, due to ECPs' relative positions in the workplace.

As a group of early career professionals, most had not experienced ownership at this level previously and it had a profound effect on their self-esteem (Liu et al. 2012) *"So I felt a sense of like, just shock as well….Look at me I'm doing this"* (P12). The three key suggested PO motives of efficacy and effectance, self-identity and sense of place / belonging were often fulfilled (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Pierce et al. 2009a; Brown et al. 2014b; Dawkins et al. 2017). Other previously posited motives include accountability and territoriality which, alongside the motives, form part of promotional and preventative PO (Avey et al. 2009). Whilst the inclusion of territoriality has been debated (as mentioned in the literature review), little discussion has focussed on accountability. This study finds evidence to suggest the inclusion of accountability, along with (Avey et al. 2009) proposal, that it can be developed via beliefs of holding oneself and others answerable. P8's response was typical of how the motive of accountability spurred her on:

"Success, because you're going to see something through, you're going to see it to the end, you're going to want it to go well, because if its associated with you, you don't, you don't want to be associated with something that's failed" (P8)

Being able to justify your actions to others is a key element of accountability (Tetlock 1999) and this separates it from responsibility, although at times the words were used interchangeably by the WPS and employers: *"Responsibility is always good" (E3),* and P15 noting that *"I think ownership means that I feel responsible for how I perform and how my region performs."* (P15).(Pierce et al. 2001; Pierce et al. 2004) have suggested that responsibility is an outcome of PO, which this study concurs with. As discussed previously, P15 felt less ownership for other regions such as the UK, believing that his supervisor led this area and was thus more accountable. In contrast, in the EMEA region, where he had invested himself to a greater degree, he perceived himself as leading and so was motivated to be accountable for its outcomes. Other WPS, such as P1 and 12, also highlighted working with others to be accountable for their actions.

The way in which individuals fulfil PO motives seemed socially constructed. The organisation, and individuals within the organisation who "gave ownership", role-modelled expected behaviours, thus allowing motives of self-efficacy, identity, sense of belonging and accountability to be satisfied. P17 stressed the sense of belonging motive, but this affective commitment (Mayhew et al. 2007; Liu et al. 2012) was also felt by P4, 11, 16 and P18:

"it's just a feeling of belonging between everyone. Everyone understands what we are all here to do and everyone understand that we should help each other, and we all go out of our way to do that." P17

P17's desire 'to be part of something' resulted in a social construction of ownership, in which (he perceived) everyone understood their role. Whilst this may or may not be the shared perception of others in the organisation, from his perspective, he felt that this shared understanding was a fundamental part of

PO. Individuals owned their workload to be part of the collective with what P17 described as a resulting positive relationship with people (Howell and Hill 2009).

Nevertheless, not all PO motives were identified in this study. Territoriality is posited as a form of 'preventative' PO by Avey et al. (2009), highlighting the cognitive elements of this construct, although (Brown et al. 2005b; Brown 2009) it is also a behavioural expression. This study found few examples of territoriality and so is unable to confirm or deny its inclusion. Stimulation has also been suggested to be both an 'arousal activation' and a 'territorial satisfaction' (Pierce and Jussila 2011; Rantanen and Jussila 2011; Jussila et al. 2012; Jussila et al. 2015), although as mentioned in the literature review, very few scholars have referred to it since its inclusion. This may be partly due to the challenges of measuring activation in the workplace and the individuality of the construct (Hackman and Oldham 1976), which also puts it outside of the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it does seem likely that individuals are motivated to find stimulation in the workplace (Pierce and Jussila 2011) and further research in this area may be beneficial.

For those individuals who felt high levels of ownership, PO motives were often enabled through the control, self-investment, self-congruity and safety routes, resulting in the development of WPS confidence and pride. Taking ownership, doing a job well and being praised for it gave most WPS immense pride (P1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 19, 20 in particular). P12 provides a common example of the sense of pride felt by the WPS:

> *"But also pride in your work as well. Like that's my task and that's my responsibility… I see myself as owning that day, because that's my day that I run" P12*

Yet feelings of pride are not sufficiently covered in PO research, other than in the works of Di Muro and Noseworthy (2013); Kirk et al. (2015); Ahuvia et al. (2018), whose research focuses on PO from a consumer perspective. Nonetheless, similarities were found in this work-related study. Authentic pride formed via competence and self-investment (Tracy and Robins 2007) was observed in most WPS: *"wow, I've actually done all of that*

from starting with nothing" (P4), with only P3 struggling to provide examples. The PDAs and employer 1 concurred, all expressing how proud many WPS felt owning tasks, projects and their job role: *"they use the word proud quite a lot"* (PDA1); *"They feel such a sense of pride in what they'd done*" (PDA3) "*pride in their job"" (E1a)*. There were fewer examples of 'hubristic pride' (Tracy and Robins 2007), which relates to the evaluation of one's traits or attributes as superior, although this may be because the WPS may not have wanted to show this sort of negative pride during the interview (Kirk et al. 2915).

Feedback from supervisors and others in the organisation was important for a continuous cycle of accountability, feedback and pride, with the WPS professional identity feeling validated by managers:

> *"If I owned projects that have positive feedback and, you know, I've had that pat on the back then I definitely feel proud" P7*

Li and Qian (2016) suggest that job-related PO results in individuals proactively seeking feedback, and whilst P15 suggested an early adoption of this during his first meeting with his Early Professional Manager, when he asked her *"what right now, would you change?"* (P15), in most instances, feedback was not initially sought. More frequently, ownership of small tasks resulted in feedback and praise which then gave the WPS confidence to take more ownership. The PDAs talked about this circle of validation, including this example from PDA2:

" I think ownership also comes from good feedback from managers as well, it sounds really bizarre, but I suppose that they get their validation from the feedback…and that makes them own it more I think, that makes them like the job more" PDA2

Whilst pride often fulfilled the efficacy and effective motive, pride is also a means of fulfilling the identity motive. Having experienced a liminal phase, many felt pride and confidence in their new selves: "*I feel like I am an equal to the other people in my team"* (P14) and this tended to be the only occasions when hubris pride was observed (Tracy and Robins 2007), although this statement is as much about P14 changing identity and self-efficacy. The PDAs concurred, suggesting that many WPS returned to university with a different identity. P12 talked about how the experience had changed her and how frustrated she was

with her old self for not always going onto campus for lectures and seminars during her 2nd year at university. She felt she had been lazy, but this experience of work, owning tasks and her job role brought her the satisfaction and pleasure of doing a job well, giving her a picture of her future self: *"I'm actually embarrassed…because it's like, what was I thinking, what was wrong with me"* (P12).

Confidence in presenting, talking in meetings and confidence in the quality of their work were all by-products of taking ownership for their job role: *"They made that advert; they wrote that copy. So that obviously builds their confidence"* (E2). P19 suggested that because he felt believed in and trusted to take ownership, this built his confidence in his own abilities. Nevertheless, this confidence can be fragile at times, as P1 discovered after making a mistake: *"there was a bit of push back….and it sort of knocked my confidence a little bit"* (P1). Nevertheless, with the help of his supervisor, he rebuilt his confidence and was then happy to offer to take on an additional *role, "so I felt at that point I felt confident enough in myself and in the job role"* (P1). All WPS identified an improvement in confidence, except for P5/P13 who did not mention it during the interview. Even P3, whose confidence was dented at times because of her supervisor, felt that her confidence had developed *"to some extent"* (P3). Although this was a WPS who joined her organisation with greater efficacy and effectance from her previous job role, which didn't fully transfer to new surroundings. (Edwards 2014b) study of WPS also found positive self-efficacy following a work placement, so these outcomes are not surprising. It is therefore difficult to ascertain if feelings of ownership satisfied self-efficacy or if this was the by-product of a work placement.

Other than the outcomes mentioned above, those participants who displayed job-related PO felt many positive emotions from feeling job-related ownership, such as the joy and happiness at doing a job well (P15), feeling valued and fulfilled (P4) and giving some of these WPS a sense of purpose: *"Sense of purpose. Sense of achievement when it goes well. Just feeling really responsible, really being part of it" (*P12, but also mentioned by P4, P10 and P20). Meaningful work and PO have been broadly mentioned together (Wang et al. 2018a), but there is no empirical evidence making it a fruitful area for future PO studies.

Nevertheless, confidence and pride were the most frequently stated positive outcomes of job-related PO for this group of participants, both of which link to suggested outcomes of job satisfaction and self-esteem (Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011; Avey et al. 2012; Liu et al. 2012). For many of these WPS, this was the first time they had carefully crafted and created something that was theirs, but which also had an impact on the organisation. Legacy-building was noted frequently (you may remember P7's example of the placement programme that she and another WPS created within their organisation). P12 was delighted that her supervisor noted her strong contribution, including designing a new and significantly different placement recruitment process: *"my manager, XXX….she said, I've left such a legacy in the team"* (P12). The term 'legacy' was used by Employer 1, PDA 1 and 3 as well as the WPS. PDA3 suggested the WPS mindset was often mentioned in terms of their contribution: *"I want to be able to leave something," or, "I want to be able to leave a lasting kind of impact"* (PDA3). Not all WPS (P3, 13 and 16) felt they provided a tangible contribution and given that their ownership experiences were less frequent, or they were not "given" ownership, shows there may be patterns between being given ownership and positive organisational outcomes for both individuals, their supervisors, and organisations. E3 sums up the all-round positive outcomes, that job-related PO in WPS can bring:

> "Significant and it's multi-faceted I would say...It's very easy in business I think to get used to what you do and get a bit bored by it, and then when you see it through the lens of somebody else who's coming at it fresh, it can motivate you…But we also like the ideas they come up with, like the fresh way that they do things" E3

4.11.2 The Pain of Job-Related Psychological Ownership

There is however a duality to PO which for this group of early career professionals demonstrated more negative PO outcomes.

Whilst early PO empirical research considered antecedents and the positive of feelings of ownership, studies have also suggested other outcomes which may

have a negative impact on individuals and their managers / colleagues. Most frequently posited is the notion of territoriality and how feelings of ownership may lead to claiming and defending behaviours of what individuals consider "theirs" (Brown et al, 2005; Brown et al 2014a; Brown and Zhu, 2016; Kirk et al, 2018), as well as protecting what is "mine" via knowledge-withholding behaviour (Han et al; 2010; Peng, 2013; Peng and Pierce, 2015; Anand et al 2020). This will be discussed at a later point in this section.

Organisational studies literature generally suggests that a lack of individual control may lead to stress (Greenberger et al., 1988, 1989; Lee et al., 1990; Spector, 1986; Terry and Jimmieson, 1999), which has led PO scholars to tentatively suggest this may be a negative PO outcome (Pierce et al. 2001; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Pierce et al. 2009b; Liu et al. 2012; Brown et al. 2014b; Zhang 2020). Dawkins et al. (2017) suggests that in the same way that the relationship between job demands and job stresses is curvilinear, this may also be true of PO. Adil and Kamal (2018) are the only theorists who have assessed burnout, suggesting in their study of teachers that burnout has a negative relationship with preventative PO.

In this study, those individuals who displayed signs of high levels of job-related PO, did also display evidence of stress-related behaviour. P12 and P15 were individuals who experienced the highest levels of stress, although for varied reasons. P12 worked in a team managing the recruitment of early career employees at a multinational organisation. This role had previously been undertaken by two people, but a company restructure resulted in it becoming one role. P12 initially managed the role, and was enjoying the responsibility provided, but as the recruitment season continued, she was running assessment centres three days per week, working 12-hour days and struggling to keep on top of the administration involved in recruitment on the other two days. Her story is best shown in her own words:

"But I don't think I actually really truly spoke up about it and expressed how much work I was doing, until the November, probably mid-November and I started to say, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, I need help with this" P12

P12, who showed high levels of ownership, often worked long hours, taking on increased responsibility which on the face of it she was coping with. However, she had internalised any anxiety about the workload for fear of disappointing her supervisors. For individuals at the start of their career, there is no prior frame of reference to help them understand fair and achievable workloads, nor how to ask for help without feeling as if they are letting people down:

"I felt like I was disappointing people by not being able to do everything for everyone, and actually by saying, I need help, and getting help, it benefited me in the long run. But it was just learning how to say, listen that's too much, I'm only an intern here, I've only been here a couple of months". P12

Whilst this is partly about feeling a lack of control due to a high workload (Pierce et al. 2001; Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Pierce et al. 2009b; Liu et al. 2012; Brown et al. 2014b; Zhang 2020), this is also partly about identity. If an individual sees themselves as a competent person and prides themselves on their ability to manage themselves, then in this type of situation there may be a disconnect between their personal identity and social identity (Hillenbrand and Money 2015), with the resulting lack of self-congruity (Morewedge 2021) resulting in feelings of stress. Given this was also likely to occur during a period of liminality (Beech 2011), in which P12 hadn't fully moved from her student mindset to that of a worker, in the extract above she labels herself as *"only the intern"* (P12), demonstrating the disconnect between what she perceived to be the role of an intern, versus her lived experience. For individuals with perceptions of high competence, the loss of face with supervisors and herself may have resulted in her justifying the challenges she faced by returning to the comfort of a simpler identity.

However, there is also another side of her that was excited by the responsibility and the opportunities presented to her:

> *"I felt responsible, and I loved the responsibility of it… and I felt like it was on my shoulders more than it should have been. I was impressed that the company would trust me….but yeah, it was more the team that I was frustrated….Why did it take me having to be upset or something happening for help to set in?" P12*

This appeared to lead to an internal battle in her mind raging between frustration at the team for not helping her when she obviously couldn't cope with the workload, but pride in being trusted to do what she perceived to be a responsible role:

> *"it can be too much, especially at a young age when you don't quite know how … when you're still learning about how to deal with it. Stress and pressure that you might not really expect or should be dealing with at that point in your career. P12*

Thus, for those individuals at the start of their career, there can be a desire to people-please and therefore if they feel under too much pressure, they may not feel comfortable to let these feelings be known, either for fear of letting their supervisor or the team down or being disappointed in their own capabilities. The lack of frames of reference regarding how "work works" means that some may internalise this pressure with the resultant build-up of stress.

P15 also felt a great deal of stress, but for different reasons. He was a very competent individual (as suggested by employer 2) who took on a great deal of additional responsibility, but struggled in two ways. By his own admission he wanted to complete all pieces of work the moment they arrived on his desk, which resulted in him working late nights and weekends:

"I think especially at the start, the kind of weight that I felt on me meant that XXX just ate into my whole life" P15

Learning the ropes of a job role is an expected learning curve, but sometimes with strong performers, because of a high level of competence, this seemed sometimes to be forgotten and it was assumed that they were managing well. P15 also had a desire to be involved in lots of different work and had elevated expectations of himself, which also caused anxiety. As mentioned previously, his job role literally possessed him, taking over his life in both a pleasurable way, as he enjoyed being consumed in work, but ultimately with some negative consequences, such as working long hours and constantly thinking about work. He talks about the negative sides of ownership again in terms of stress:

"I think it can have a negative effect, just in terms of stress and tiredness and not being able to focus, not being able to relax and not be able to really spend time with the people that are with you but sometimes worrying about something else." P15

P15 was also living at home, which was an hour away from his office. After one early company event that he was responsible for, he had a car accident on his way home: *"I had a slight … I had a car accident on the way home which kind of tarnishes how that event well"* (P15). Whilst this accident is not being attributed to the effects of a high level of PO, it did occur during a period of high stress. By his own admission, living so far from his workplace caused additional stress in an individual who was already consumed by his work. He was however very appreciative of support from his Early Professional Manager straight afterwards: *"Early Professional Manager helped me sort my life out...not all companies would have done"* (P15). One of his managers, E2, also became aware of his high level of work and discussed this with him:

"And he did get to the point where me and our manager…had a chat where we just said, we don't want you to burn out. The work you're doing is great, but it's too much, no one person can do all of that. I think that's the negative side…it's taking on too much, trying to own a lot of things. E2

Other employers also realised that certain individuals could take too much ownership, which can have a detrimental effect. E3 talks about a graduate who had joined his team:

"She takes too much ownership. She could struggle to delegate, so in her most recent appraisal, where she feels a little bit overwhelmed by how much work she's had, we've had to encourage her to delegate up and also to delegate down. So she was holding it all in because she thought it was all her responsibility." E3

In addition to P12 and 15, P19 also emphasised the burden of trust and responsibility:

"trust puts a weight on your shoulders, which isn't necessarily a negative but it's always at the back of your mind, I don't want to let these people down, they've given me this much responsibility....so there's definitely a level of stress there" P19

However, P19 did suggest that the organisation tried to actively combat stress with resources including on-site mental health support. Nevertheless, as an outsider looking in, I was surprised at how heavy the weight of responsibility seemed to weigh on some ECPs and especially those who exhibited the highest levels of job-related PO. They were both delighted and surprised to be given so much responsibility, but equally, so strong was their desire to do well, they at times struggled with the heavy mental load.

All three of these individuals worked in organisations where ownership was at the core of their organisational culture and therefore it shows that, whilst there can be many positives for both individuals and organisations who have a culture of ownership, there may also be negative aspects, such as stress, which could lead to burnout. Whilst this may not occur in all early career professionals who demonstrate early signs of strong ownership, it may be that this is internalised and eventually leads to burnout (Kaur et al, 2013; Adnan and Kamal, 2015; Su and Ng, 2019). P4, for example, was an individual that had strong feelings of ownership and could see how it could be all-consuming:

> "it's a really tricky one, because it's critical to have ownership, but its critical not to own everything. Because you know, if you do own everything, you will just stress out too much and you, you won't understand the true value of what you're doing because you won't be able to invest yourself deeply into everything" P4

Nevertheless, whilst he seemed to work very hard, ownership never possessed him in the same way that others suggested. Why this might be was not entirely clear, but a tentative suggestion would be due to a mixture of personality traits, the organisational culture in his workplace, being slightly less ownership-driven, and also the fact that he may have not been as honest about stress levels. Therefore, it would be wrong to make assumptions, but this study provides us with a first glimpse of how stress may impact the working life of early career professionals and in particular those individuals in organisations where ownership is part of the organisational culture. Most participants were aware of the potential hazard of taking on too much work putting pressure on themselves resulting in stress, however simultaneously they were worried about letting people down, especially their supervisors, and that can add weight to their shoulders. The burden of PO has been mentioned briefly, but mainly in terms of protecting one's self identity, but this may be the first study to demonstrate how heavy a weight PO can be for some individuals. The weight of responsibility better captures the effect that PO may have on some individuals. Further studies in this area would be beneficial, not only using early career professionals as

participants, but also with other groups of employees. Studies might seek to ascertain if there are certain groups of individuals more prone to stress and at what point on a PO curve these feelings might occur.

Previous research suggests that individuals' territorial behaviour may communicate a target as "theirs" by 'marking' or 'claiming'. This may be via anticipatory defensive behaviour, such as putting a coat over a chair or knowledge-withholding, such as not sharing a report with a colleague (Brown et al, 2005; Brown et al 2014a; Brown and Zhu, 2016; Kirk et al, 2018). However, few instances of this type of behaviour were seen in this study.

P10, who worked in a trainee area manager role, did not want to delegate, because she preferred to keep control herself:

> *"I think, it wasn't so much that I didn't have the confidence to delegate in that I wouldn't feel comfortable asking people it's that I wouldn't feel comfortable asking them because I'd rather do it myself."* P10

This control feels less about territorial connotations, but came from prior experiences of student projects where she was afraid of trusting others with her "grade", as she had had bad experiences previously. She believed that she learnt to trust others during that year, allowing her to relinquish some control.

Some participants (P2,10, 11, 14) mentioned their role / projects in terms of their "babies", suggesting territorial undercurrents. P11 struggled to hand back projects towards the end of her placement:

> *"Very proudly. And also, sad because they're kind of my babies now. It was difficult. It was more difficult than I thought to hand over those projects. I like sharing them but also fully giving them and then … not even giving them and moving onto different projects, but it was tough for me," P11*

However, this feels more like sadness at knowing that a good journey is about to end. It did not seem to lead to territorial behaviour for P11 or the other WPS, and the PDAs and employers suggested that they rarely saw this type of

behaviour at this level. This may be partly due to the brief time period that individuals spent with the organisation and their lowly status. Further studies may be able to explore this area.

Towards the end of the placement, it could be concluded that the desire to craft the handover book for the incoming student was a form of identity-orientated marking (Brown et al. 2005a; Brown 2009) for some individuals. In these instances, however, it felt more about pride and showing their distinctiveness, rather than a form of marking their territory.

To conclude, ownership does have this duality, which means that it can be hard at times to balance the outcomes. P15 nicely sums up the positives of feeling ownership and the joy and job satisfaction it may bring, but also how ownership can weigh heavily on individuals if it is not effectively controlled:

> *"I think ownership means that you work hard…that you are driven and that you care and perform and I think it helps you to get up in the morning, but at the same time, you might not be able to sleep at night. I think especially at the start, the kind of weight that I felt on me meant that XXX just ate into my whole life" P15*

4.12 Theme Four: Longevity or liquidity?

The final theme highlights the implications of job-related PO on these early career professionals' futures. Does the strength of feelings for the job role influence how they feel about the organisation and how might that impact their thoughts and plans on future careers, given their return to university for a final year of study?

4.12.1 Decoupling / Divestment

Decoupling or divestment rituals provide an opportunity to move a target from "mine" to "not me". According to Pierce et al. (2003), decoupling usually occurs due to a withdrawal of one of the motives or catalysts, resulting in

targets becoming less accessible or routes no longer available. However, beyond this initial consideration, scholars have not considered workplace divestment from a PO perspective. Nevertheless, due to the fixed-term nature of these job roles, these participants' experiences may be atypical to more established work participants, although there are comparisons between this sample and other samples demonstrating the divestment of possessions, especially for those on fixed-term contracts.

Whilst many rituals are aimed at attaching the target to the individual's extended self, there are also divestment rituals designed to disengage with targets when an individual leaves a role or organisation (Pierce et al. 2003). Lastovicka and Fernandez (2005) suggested three ways of disposition, depending on the valence of the item: divesting of "never me", separating "me to not me" and disposing to someone similar, and leaving a common identity.

There were very few examples of WPS divesting a role that was "never me". As you are aware by now, P3 did not show examples of job-related ownership whilst on her work placement and so it could be said that her experience is not relevant to this study. Nevertheless, this experience is comparable to someone disposing of an unwanted possession and for those individuals who feel they never fit in a job-role, so this may be a comparable experience.

P3 never felt suited to her job role, was moved between different departments, and therefore felt that the routes of self-congruity, intimate knowledge and investing self (Pierce et al. 2001; Morewedge 2021) were closed to her. At the six-month point of the placement, her line manager told her she was not on track to come back as a graduate and therefore she entered a liminal phase, decoupling from "never me" to considering what was "more like me". This process was undertaken in two ways, firstly by ascertaining potential future career options via a continual analysis of what was or wasn't "her" in terms of future career options, and secondly by distancing herself from the role and her "past undesired self" (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005).:

> *"I've said this to a few people now, but if I ever spend another week in front of the computer where all I have to do is type, I think I might go crazy" P3*

This desire to move away from "never me" was so strong that she had to disassociate herself with key elements of the role, both publicly and

privately. During the interview, she later stated that if she was interested in the role, it would be fine to be in front of a computer, but the need to publicly disassociate with elements of the role in the first instance was required for her to be able to move through this liminal phase. Her desire to move as quickly from "never me" to "more like me" left her feeling uncertain and *"like a 10-year-old again" (*P3) revelatory of key elements of being "betwixt and between" identities (Turner 2011). Her identity confusion was all the more powerful to her, because of her previous strong ownership experience in a part-time role. However, her reflection on this experience from being efficacious in one environment (p/t role) to a complete lack of confidence (work placement) helped her look forward and move on from this liminal space: *"I'd say one of my downfalls has definitely been not being able to just accept what I know"* (P3)

There were examples of positive valence when WPS were leaving a job role that they enjoyed. Divestment rituals were frequently employed to change "mine" to "not mine", especially if individuals were handing over to a new WPS. Rituals allow owners to cleanse and transition meaningful elements of the job role from their life, whilst still maintaining private meanings. The transference of a 'handover book' from one work placement student to another was a symbolic form of facilitating the new WPS transition into the workplace, but also providing the outgoing WPS with an opportunity to parade their "intimate knowledge of the job role" and demonstrate their legacy, as typified by P7 when discussing her input to the handover book:

> *"You can teach anyone how to use a system but you can't always teach people to smile to people when introducing themselves...that's a new element I kind of brought to the role" P7*

In addition, the WPS also frequently sat on the interview panel for the new WPS, providing them with a form of control in the decoupling process by expressing who "their job" should pass onto: *"so I'll be interviewing my replacement, which will be fun"* (P14). In the same way that the Mere effect (Heider 1958; Beggan 1992) suggests we favour items that we own, passing ownership to someone we favour may help facilitate the divestment process.

Those individuals not handing over to a new WPS used ionic transfer rituals (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005; Peck and Shu 2018) to facilitate the divestment process, such as photographs taken at the organisation, last day messages on LinkedIn, and by completing a self-reflective portfolio as part of their coursework, which PDA one suggested allowed them to be proud of their achievements and professional development. P8 completed a final presentation and was delighted that her friend took a picture as a reminder: *"I have a picture of my slide, my friends was really good and she got photo"* (P8).

There were also examples of shared meaning beyond the team and organisation which includes prior WPS. As mentioned previously, employer one discussed how their WPS had started an "alumni board", including nicknames for current and former WPS. There was a big sense of 'belonging' in this department, beyond its current staff members, reminding us of the narratives of ownership. Biographies can go beyond the current and new incumbents and the ghosts of previous owners can also play a role in the divestment process, by making individuals still feel part of something even if they are not there.

There were also occasions when individuals could disinvest to someone "like them". This could also include the divestment rituals mentioned above. Whilst having some control in the recruitment process and investing self in the handover book made this process easier, the PDAs were aware that this transfer of ownership was still not entirely easy due to a duality of feelings. PDA1 expressed the tensions often arising:

> *" they also- they want to be the ones to produce the very best handover notes to train up the students as well because…if they've got to hand it over to someone, then they want it to be a good job, and yet they don't necessarily want them to be slightly- quite as good as they were…it's something like I want to be the best person handing over, but I don't want them to be quite as good as me." PDA1*

These feelings remind us that divestment is never truly easy and whilst the cognitive element of PO will suggest the pragmatic, practical response, there

may also be a spectrum of emotions felt by individuals regarding the loss of ownership and once again finding themselves betwixt and between identities (Turner 2011). High levels of PO may cause divestment challenges, with employer one suggesting that both former WPS frequently visited their department post their work placement:

> *"We can't actually get rid of our previous placement, they keep on coming back….it's only recently that XXX has dropped off the radar really, since he's graduated, otherwise they were here all the time, all of them, we just couldn't get rid of them.* E1

Therefore, a keen sense of belonging and identity with the team can have implications for a successful divestment. Other WPS at different organisations, such as P11, found it hard to hand over her projects, as she thought about them as "hers". Whilst she was happy to share, full divestment was a challenge. Given this was likely to be the first time that she had divested her creations, there is a small sense of personal loss, especially in this instance, as the organisation's discussions about a graduate scheme at that point had not made any decisions:

> *"very proudly and also, sad because they're kind of my babies now. It was difficult. It was more difficult than I thought to hand over those projects" P11*

Other outcomes for those individuals who demonstrated strong ownership feelings were more mixed. P12 had been offered a place on the graduate scheme, which made the disinvestment process different, as she was mourning the job role, not the organisation. P4, 15 and 19 were still considering options, which will be discussed further in the following sections.

Nevertheless, some WPS (P2, P10, P12) knew that they were returning to the organisation post-graduation, were continuing to work part-time for the organisation (P9) or (P1, 14, 15 and P20) being fast-tracked to the final stages of the Graduate recruitment process. Therefore, their divestment experiences may be different to the norm, as they had both the security of returning to university and the strong possibility of returning to the organisation.

PO divestment should be of interest to scholars and organisations, due to the opportunities to consider out-duction processes and opportunities to retain and

the possible re-recruitment of alumni. The transfer of ownership from one individual to another may be full of emotions, even when the outgoing employee has chosen to move roles, and further research with both incoming and outgoing employees could be beneficial.

Nevertheless, there is potentially a new PO target which may both strengthen PO feelings and result in continuous career changes.

4.12.2 Career-related Psychological Ownership

One unexpected ownership target mentioned by WPS during their interviews was career ownership. Whilst two previous PO studies mention PO as moderating the relationship between career ownership and work-related outcomes (Olckers and du Plessis 2014; Olckers and Koekemoer 2017), this study takes a different approach, suggesting that for some their career is an ownership target, rather than an antecedent of career success. Career PO allows individuals to fulfil traditional PO motives of self-efficacy, identity, sense of belonging, stimulating them to make individualised choices such as P8 talking about ownership:

> *"massively, especially like terms of career. Because at the end of the day, the only person you can really rely on is yourself. So I kind of own my future" P8*

This desire for career ownership appears to be partly constructed via school, university and parental influences regarding the rhetoric suggesting career flexibility rather than "a job for life", but was raised independently by some participants (P1, 5, 8, 15 and PDA1) when discussing their beliefs on workplace ownership. P1 suggested a duality to ownership, which P5 concurred with:

*One…being on a day to day role perspective of owning the requests…and owning the projects to make sure they are delivered...at the same time it's the ownership of myself…*if there are opportunities out there…it's down to me to make sure I do that" P1

PDA1 also agreed with these WPS, suggesting she often heard surprising outcomes from WPS when they discussed this duality. Below she mimics how

the WPS often spoke about the tension between forms of ownership during their final meetings:

> *"Well you know, sort of like, yeah, I've had a great time, but I want to do this, and this"…so- so they have- they have two different forms of ownership, they feel very much integrated while they're there, but there's also…that kind of like, um, I own my own career, and it's not going to be just fixed in one place for a long time" PDA1*

This perception has connotations of a boundaryless career (DeFillippi and Arthur 1994), yet in some instances where job-related or organisational PO is also high, some individuals seemed happy to remain in their organisation, such as P2 and P9: *" hopefully I can be a XXX for years to come"* (P2). Therefore, career PO may or may not be boundary-less depending on the individual and other PO targets. Consequently, whilst PO targets may align simultaneously with career PO, if there is tension between targets, the strongest attachment may take precedence, which will be referred to later in this section.

Donald et al. (2019) suggest that individuals who take career ownership forge a protean career (Hall and Moss 1998), whereas those individuals who do not own their career are more likely to establish a more traditional work life. This study partly concurs, suggesting those who seemed to demonstrate strong feelings of career PO were more likely to look at a variety of different career opportunities: *"this year has made me realise that I'm probably going to start my own business in the summer"* (P15).

However, whilst a protean career does have similarities to career PO regarding self-direction, there are significant differences, with protean careers answering the question, "how can I be effective in managing my career", whilst PO asks, "what do I feel is mine" (Brown et al. 2014b). When P15 was asked if he owned his career, he suggested *"Yes, 100%. 100%....I think a career is like, it's almost your life" (P15).* Donald et al (2019) and Hall and Moss (1998) suggest protean career orientations are a mindset driven by the individual rather than the organisation towards advancing their careers (Hall and Moss 1998; Briscoe et al. 2006; Hall et al. 2013). PO is also driven by individuals who have a desire for self-direction "*owning my year…. to plan it so….I can get the best possible year for myself" (P1)*. Nonetheless, because

PO has both cognitive and affective elements, it goes beyond a rational desire to shape one's own work destiny, to include this emotional connection of "mine". James (1890) suggests our psychic powers are as much a part of us as tangible possessions, and it is the sum of everything that equates to the "self". The example with P15 above shows how for some individuals with high levels of career PO, the target can become entwined into self, which goes far beyond being in control.

Furthermore, protean careers also highlight an individual's values and desire for meaningful work, and whilst rituals may make ownership meaningful to the individual, it does not necessarily follow that this is value-laden work. In fact, some WPS, such as P1, showed a strategic ruthlessness in ensuring that the work he took on could be beneficial for his career above all else:

> *"as it's on the radar of our UK CEO….opportunity to stand out …Which means I have taken the decision to stand down from the XXX role… But even when I think about my part time job or the football media… if the opportunity doesn't impress me enough….I don't get involved. But if I feel… I can learn something here or I can really make an impression, I would take up an opportunity." P1*

This strategic ownership of their career was also observed in other participants, such as P19 and P20. P19 ritually built his network via weekly coffee meetings, asking the staff member for two names of other staff members that he should also meet. The organisation systematically encouraged this strategic thinking in the form of a final ritual of presenting to the Commercial Officer, demonstrating the business impact they had made over the year. Whilst the organisation used this as part of the criteria to consider WPS for their graduate programme, P19 also utilised this as a means to gain experience, which could be promoted both internally and externally in a pursuit of their chosen career:

> *"me and two other interns, we are always thinking about how our work is going to contribute to us umm getting back on the grad scheme, and I think that ties into my career ownership" P19*

Nevertheless, the strength of career ownership did differ from those forementioned examples in a similar way to job-related PO. An example of

limited career PO was P17: *"Ownership of the career? (pause) Not particularly, to be honest"* (P17). P16 had also not considered career ownership previously and whilst the strength of feelings was on the low side, she did suggest taking ownership of whether she would like a career in the future: "I *will take that responsibility to find my own career and if I don't want a career, I won't have one" (P16).* However, whilst Donald et al. (2019) suggest those without career ownership are more likely to take a traditional future path, this was not always the case with these WPS, with P16 suggesting her plans involved a *"move to London and who knows, I don't particularly want...a grad scheme"* (P16). P17 concurred, suggesting he would travel and then look at a range of opportunities, which might include his placement organisation but might not.

In other WPS, the career target was not as concrete in structure as other PO targets initially, but because it is more malleable and easily available, there were greater opportunities for the emotional connection to develop. P12 was a typical example of one of these individuals:

> *I've never known really what I want to do with my career since ever…I've never known…I've really learnt what I like, learnt what I don't like, learnt what I'm actually really good at and I now think, right go, you've got this opportunity and figuring out what it is. So I definitely want to take ownership of my career" P12*

Career PO, like other forms of PO, involves psychic energy to cultivate, care and control (Sartre 1956; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Ahuvia 2005; Watkins et al 2015). Like the opportunity to job craft to make the job role "mine" (Wrzesniewski and Dutton 2001; Demerouti 2014), individuals reframed the boundaries of their careers to adapt to new opportunities and possibilities. By taking control and investing themselves into their career-related goals, some of the WPS were forthright in making decisions. As mentioned previously, P4, early in his placement, spoke to his manager about a desire to move his role in a different direction, and was lucky to be able to job craft the role with his manager's agreement:

> *"in about the first couple months, I spoke to my manager like that quickly, and I said, I love I love what I'm doing now about really, my eyes kind of wavering over to, to, to being customer facing. So we started looking at*

different kind of opportunity ….started talking…to build up the networks saying I really want to do this" P4

As mentioned in the literature review, individuals can craft their career, as well as their job role, using both proactive career reflections and construction (Tims 2020). Examples of both forms have been found in this study (in particular P1,3,4,7,8 11,12, 13,15 and 19 for proactive career reflection) with P7 providing a typical example of her values, passions, expectations, and future possibilities:

"a company that care about their staff…work-life balance is really important but also…responsibility over things and being passionate about where I'm working…I'd love to be like area manager…I like that fast-paced environment, but at the same time you don't have that work-life balance….that would made me really unhappy" P7

There were many examples demonstrating proactive career construction with the strength of career ownership seemingly dictating how much psychic energy was invested. P1,11,15 and 19 seemed to invest the most time, with P11 being able to invest some time in work-shadowing three different areas: *"I couldn't make my mind up…she…gave me 3 weeks to do shadowing"* (P11). In the same way that job crafting seems to be an antecedent of job-related PO, it feels that career crafting could be an antecedent of career-related PO. Nevertheless, far more research into these areas need to be undertaken to establish any connection.

What also requires far more research is what role career PO may play in an individual's life and how organisations can facilitate individuals to gain job role and career PO self-congruity (Morewedge 2021) or provide future internal opportunities. Baruch (2006) suggests that scholars are quick to talk about the demise of the traditional career vs new careers, whereas in reality it is more nuanced than this, with some people and organisations still demonstrating traditional career options, whilst others veer towards boundary-less options. Therefore, there will be forms of careers that work for all. What may be interesting about career PO could be the relationship with job and organisational PO. At many points in an individual's career, you would hope

for alignment between these targets, in that individuals are in the right role and right company for their career aspirations. However what occurs for example if the desire to take ownership of their career is extraordinarily strong such as P12: "*I definitely want to take ownership of my career, where I go & I definitely have an idea of where that is"* (P12). Even if there is an attachment to the role and the organisation, may there also be a desire to continue on with the career master plan. More research in this area is required, but this does provide another approach to conceptualising careers. How does owning their future career then link to their identity and liquid ownership? The following section will combine these two areas.

4.12.3 Future Selves and Liquid Ownership

Ibarra (1999); Ibarra and Barbulescu (2010); Ibarra and Petriglieri (2010) suggest that professional identities are malleable at the start of a career, as individual's provisional selves help them to move from one identity to another. Towards the end of these individuals' work placements many of these participants felt clearer in their identity, ascertaining who they were and who / where they wished to be post-graduation.

Garsten (1999) suggested that temporary workers could find themselves in a constant liminal state in the workplace, but this was not demonstrated with this group of participants. This seems to be partly due to the nature of WPS, in that they have a fixed date to return to their previous life, but also partly due to the efforts of organisations to facilitate the process of making them feel part of the team or organisation. As we have seen, P3 and 13 did struggle, but this was more related to supervisory problems, rather than temporal concerns.

The digitalisation of possessions does not seem to have altered how these WPS develop feelings for workplace targets, in that they seem to cultivate, shape and control items in a comparable manner to that described in other studies. Therefore, I concur with the assertions of Belk (2013); Watkins et al. (2015); Denegri-Knott et al. (2020) that the process of ownership for digital possessions is like other possession ownership including intangible ones.

As mentioned at the start of this research, work placements are often utilised as a 'talent pipeline', and many of the organisations had strategies in place to extend this talent pipeline via opportunities to work shadow or have career-related meetings with more senior staff. Organisation 2 managed this process particularly well, with P12,14,15 and 20 all suggesting that they had met with individuals within the organisation to help evaluate future opportunities and/or discuss their career aspirations. Many were keen to return to the organisation, but the graduate roles were targeted into two key areas which differed from their placement role. Using an iterative process of identity matching, renegotiation, pragmatism (that this was a good company in a convenient location – P20) and the desire to be authentic, individuals danced between current provisional self and future selves (Ibarra and Petrigileri 2010), reconstructing their identities partly via a social construction, involving both an outside-in as well as inside-out orientation work (Beech 2011).

P14 experience was indicative of the experience of this organisation's participants:

> *"I've always thought, oh it's not for me, but I've decided to actually look into it now. So I spoke to my HR mentor…I had a call with that person… she knows someone that's more specific…I've got a call with her on Thursday…. I really want to go back into XXX not just because it was be easy for me…but…because I really like the company." P14*

There did seem to be a genuine attachment to organisation 2, hence the desire to stay with this organisation, especially once discovering there may be a role that fits with their perception of their future self.

Nevertheless, within this group there was also some pragmatism to look at other organisation's graduate schemes, in case they were unsuccessful in their primary graduate applications or due to career PO, which took their plans in a slightly different direction. P15 was an example of this, as he planned to set up his own business over the summer months at the end of his placement. If he made more money from this venture than his "day job", then his future path would be running his own business, "So if I can make more than I was making in my day job at XXX, I know that it's a route I could go down" (P15). His self-efficacy (Bandura 1977; Banudra 2012) and proactive career construction (Tims

2020) was such that out of all the WPS at this organisation, he was most likely to proactively explore other opportunities, due to the strength of his career PO.

Those WPS who identified most strongly with the organisation were not necessarily the individuals who had the strongest desire to return. As mentioned in the previous section, P1, whilst suggesting a strong desire to return to the organisation, also mentioned a strong desire to move into football, where he currently worked part time. This was a prior area, where he had demonstrated PO from a part-time job role and thus, if opportunities became available in both sectors, this would result in a very tough choice for him:

> "if you had to choose between xxx and a premiership football club, I would say it's too tough to answer (laughs all round) because I would absolutely love to work at xxx…so working for a digital…company makes sense…that's why for me it's a case of now if xxx and football came up, that would be a very tough decision (P1).

As mentioned in the career ownership section, occasionally these WPS did have strong attachment to two different targets, which resulted in a tension. Whilst no current PO research suggests the mental battle that may take place between two equally attractive targets, it seems likely that the more open, accessible and 'manipulatable' target will win. Nevertheless, further research in this area would be beneficial.

P11, whom you may recall talking about her organisation and job role as her "first love", did have a strong desire to return and whilst the organisation was trying to introduce a graduate programme, progress was slow. Therefore, as the organisation could not guarantee a job role (even though they were very keen to hire her), she used her network and opportunities to work shadow, to explore future areas of interest:

> *"especially doing the shadowing; I love working for a big company. I think that has opened a lot of doors. I already get some people messaging, oh you're interested in this, you're interested in that…However...sometimes on my shadowing, I actually didn't shadow the specific role,.. it was a person that I was interested in"* P11

P11 used “future selves” modelling (Markus and Nurius 1986b) as a means of career decision-making. She was interested in hearing people’s career stories and from this started to build a list of future prospects.

Nonetheless, there are also some indicators of liquidity within these words and the words of other WPS. PO in this instance was always going to have a temporal element because these individuals were undertaking a work placement, but for some individuals such as P11, whilst she discussed “organisational first love”, when talking about the organisation towards the end of the interview, she quickly moved to expressing interest in other roles and other organisations. This “first love” felt fleeting, rather than lingering, and in the same way that global nomads valued possessions at a certain time and place (Bardhi et al. 2012), there were elements of ephemerality in their conversations:

> *“But I couldn’t make my mind up on three different areas of the business…she actually gave me three weeks to do shadowing in all the different areas. I loved all of them and I do think that in a different area I can see myself … I can see myself going in to.” P11*

Whilst this and other similar comments (P1, P3, P15) could be considered as a sign of liquidity, it could also be considered as career PO and then tension between attractive targets, or, as mentioned previously, pragmatism of their situation which influenced these comments. Nonetheless, for some participants this temporality did allow them to justify different decision making.

Immediacy (Bauman 2007; Bardhi et al 2012; Bauman 2013) was also demonstrated by the proximity of graduate roles in the large organisations. Whilst some individuals (P14) suggested that this proximity wasn’t the reason that they were accepting a graduate role, others ruefully accepted this proximity was part of this: *”it’s such a great place to be….such a great name to have behind you, it would be stupid not to”* (P20). However, it could be suggested that this is true for graduates across the last few decades, with easy access and prior knowledge, helpful and comforting reasons to accept graduate roles.

There were however many indicators of stability with most WPS (P2,4,8,9,10,11,12,14, 18, 19, 20) still preferring the solidity of a graduate

scheme or working for their current organisation, rather than a protean/boundaryless career or liquid nomadism (DeFillippi and Arthur 1994; Bardhi et al. 2012; Hall et al. 2013). In fact, both P2 and P9 discussed working for their organisations for over 5 years post-graduation!

Furthermore, organisations clearly have liquid elements given their need for agility, flexibility which can result in continuous change (Bauman 2013). Organisation 2 recruited a large number of WPS ever year and so they knew that there wouldn't be graduate opportunities for all. Bauman (2013) suggests that progress is perpetual and therefore whilst these individuals want stability, their occasional liquid comments or their desire of career PO may be socially constructed, as society and organisations are developing these individuals for this liquidity. Therefore it could be suggested that this current generation of students and graduates are a product of what we want them to be. Society, universities and organisations are suggesting to individuals to become life-long learners, to understand their career will not be linear, so we are preparing these future generations for perpetual liquidity and therefore should we not be surprised when sometimes they want to take control of their own careers, as summed up by PDA1:

> *"maybe that's why it works that they chop and change so often, because actually when they're there, they have this real sense of ownership and everything as well, uh, but they still got there, their, their ownership of their own career goals"* PDA1

Perhaps this is the new work-career reality for this group of individuals? They build job-related ownership quickly and whilst they are in the role, they have strong personal attachments, but just as we grow out of toys and move onto something else, they will do the same in the workplace. There may be some stronger-lasting attachments, like a favourite teddy bear that may be returned to, but these WPS have grown up in a time of an abundance of possessions and their job role is just their latest 'accessory'. Their one stable attachment may be to their career, because for those career-minded individuals it's the purest form of ownership. Further studies to ascertain the role of career ownership, alongside the role of other organisational targets, would be beneficial to build on this study's results.

4.12.4 Organisational Psychological Ownership

This study has mainly considered job-related PO, because of the accessible nature of the job role as a PO target. Nevertheless, there is an additional key target often considered in the workplace by scholars, which relates to research question three, that of the organisation. Pierce et al. (2004); Mayhew et al. (2007) suggest that whilst the organisation is an important target to consider, because it's perceived as more abstract and ambiguous, individuals are less likely to feel able to control and manipulate it, thus lowering the chances of developing an attachment.

This study concurs with this viewpoint, with fewer WPS feeling organisational PO, in comparison to job-related PO. Yet, there were differences in degrees of strength of feelings with organisational PO occasionally nested in job-related PO. There were also some outliers which suggest that like job-related PO, the reasons for organisational PO are multifaceted and socially constructed.

If participants did feel organisational PO, those in smaller organisations generally developed these feelings more quickly. Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011) suggest that PO emergence is more likely in small organisations, because the roles and the environment are less formalised, and individuals have closer proximity to leaders. P2's experience demonstrated this. He worked closely with the MD, was informally offered a graduate role exceedingly early on in his placement (within the first two months) and so a strong attachment developed quickly. He talked about working for the organisation for *"years to come" (P2).* In this instance, the organisation is seen in a less abstract form and is more accessible as a target, seemingly resulting in greater opportunities to invest self in the organisation. Both transactional and transformational leadership, along with ethical leadership, are positively related to organisational PO (Avey et al.2009; Bernhard and O'Driscoll 2011: Avey et al. 2012: Park et al.2013), and whilst this study did not cover leadership, in this instance, the role of the leader was crucial in the WPS developing an attachment to the organisation.

In another example, P17 felt a keen sense of belonging with his SME from around four months, partly from feeling that he had similar values to the

organisation, but also from learning more about the other individuals who worked in the organisation: *"just learning where everyone came from, what the office was like before I was here"* (P17). Supervisors or other team members can act as 'referents', influencing newcomers' relationships to organisational PO to be similar to their own (Sluss and Ashforth 2008: Sluss et al. 2012; Peng and Pierce 2015). In this instance, the sense of belonging motive was able to be fulfilled by the relationship he built with colleagues, allowing P17 to feel as if he was part of the history of the organisation. This study did not look at collective PO, so there is no way to ascertain if these feelings of attachment were felt by everyone, but it did suggest some form of social identity motive was present. Pierce and Jussila (2010) suggest that the social identity motive only underpins collective PO, but there may be instances, whereby those who have a strong need for social identity or self-congruity perceive this within an organisation, even if others do not. Dawkins et al. (2017) recommend further research relating to identity and this research would suggest it includes research relating to social identity.

The process of "giving ownership" also highlighted the role of organisational culture in expediating the development of organisational PO. P11's preferred placement was cancelled at the last minute, forcing her to take a role with a company that she was not attached to. Having been given significant job-related ownership, this also seemed to affect her attachment to the organisation over time. Previous research (O'Driscoll et al. 2006; Peng and Pierce 2015) suggests an individual's feelings about their job will influence how they feel about the organisation and therefore by enhancing job-related PO, individuals are more likely to feel organisational PO. This was partly demonstrated with some WPS exhibiting high levels of PO for both targets in SMEs (P2 and P17) and global organisations (P10 and 11), with P11 signifying a sense of belonging with her organisation: *"I love the company….do you think its first job love?" (P11)*.

P10 however felt stronger ownership for the organisation, rather than for the job role, as she felt that whilst her team and supervisors might change over time, the company, which held similar values to her, would remain the same. She was the only WPS to show territorial feelings towards the organisation, discussing how she had forced her mother to shop at her

organisation, rather than shopping with a competitor: *"my mom shops at XXX and we just had an XXX open down the road and I'm….there's no excuse now"* (P11)

Nevertheless, strong job-related PO did not lead to organisational PO in all WPS. P4, who worked at a global tech company, suggested that *"it's hard to feel "we" at XXX, because it's a massive company"*. However, he did suggest feelings of attachment for parts of the organisation when working on smaller projects with a common goal. P15 gave similar feedback and his stance is particularly interesting, as family members, including his father, had previously worked for the organisation. He had turned down other placement opportunities to work in this company and seemed to demonstrate high levels of job PO. Yet his feelings about the organisation were more complex:

> *"(pause) yes and no…I feel ownership towards recruitment …towards the people that I recruit, how many…if we hit our goals and deadlines. I don't feel ownership to how XXX perform, because ultimately, it's way too big a machine… Whereas if I think I worked for a smaller organisation that would be different because you're more…it doesn't matter about recruitment; it matters about the whole process." P15*

These organisations both used onboarding rituals and gave their WPS opportunities to meet senior role models, yet organisational PO seemed to elude these WPS, because of the scale of the organisations, making this target feel distant and unmalleable. Both of these individuals exhibited high levels of job-related ownership, and were committed team members, but demonstrated far less ownership for the organisation, so it was interesting that transference did not occur, especially given the high levels of control in their job roles. Peng and Pierce (2015) suggested that job PO can mediate the relationship between organisational PO and experienced job control, but these examples suggest that this may not apply to all employees, and perhaps for organisational PO, the time spent within an organisation matters more than it does in relation to job-related PO.

One outlier was participant P9, who felt a strong attachment to his organisation prior to joining. He worked for a medium-sized local organisation which had an incredibly positive image amongst his age group and was an established brand in his home region: *"being Somerset born and bred, XXX always been sort of a big part. big part of growing up"* (P10). This resulted in him feeling

organisational PO before job-related PO. He was the only participant who indicated organisational PO helped facilitate job-related PO. As posited previously, it may indicate that certain brands may induce prior attachments (such as owning or using their products), thus providing an early building block to organisational PO. However, further work specifically relating to individuals working for well-known brands needs to be conducted.

Scholars have suggested that organisational PO can influence an individual's affective commitment (Mayhew et al. 2007; Liu et al 2012), organisational commitment (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Han et al. 2010), work engagement (Ramos et al 2014; Zhang 2020), organisational based self-esteem (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Liu et al. 2012; Zhang 2020), and job satisfaction (Avey et al. 2012; Liu et al. 2012; Peng and Pierce 2015; Zhang 2020), so there are many suggested positives outcomes to organisational PO for both the individual and the organisation. However, P4 and P15 also showed signs of most of these behaviours, even if they exhibited lower levels of organisational *attachment.* Therefore, whether the organisation should concern themselves with facilitating organisational attachment, if individuals are only in short-term roles, could be questioned, with the most likely answer being both 'yes' and 'no', depending on how they manage talent management.

Some of these organisations hire far more WPS than they hire graduates, and so in terms of supply and demand, an organisational attachment is not necessary, if it doesn't affect the quality of their work. Nonetheless, Employer 2 suggested that P15 was one of the strongest WPS that she had ever worked with, and therefore the organisation probably wants to keep their high performers. This example is also particularly interesting, as P15 worked for an organisation where ownership is embedded in the organisational culture and there are obvious signs of "giving ownership" to employees. The other WPS within the organisation, who were interviewed (P12, 14, 20), exhibited organisational PO and all were hoping to return to the organisation, but P15 did not feel as much of an attachment and was looking at other graduate options. Further research could consider how to take a job role attachment and build on it to ascertain a connection to larger targets, such as the organisation. For example, is it possible for the organisational culture and

supervisors to “give ownership” of the organisation in a comparable way to giving job-related ownership?”

One way may be via the building block process between task and organisational ownership mentioned below by employer 3:

> *“if you can identify the task to start with, because that…makes you feel needed, valued, which I think is a natural human reaction.. in any organisation… thereafter… we’ve certainly seen that they start to identify with the business and…understand their position within it over time…that’s generally how it is until they leave.” E3*

This is a similar building block approach to that of job-related PO. However, E3 worked within an SME and reverts back to Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011) suggestion about individuals having easier access to these organisational targets. If multi-national organisations wish their staff to feel organisational PO, additional building blocks linking job ownership to departmental attachment through to organisational attachment may be required. However, as stated above, an organisation may decide that job-related PO is ownership enough for their staff.

It was however possible for WPS to gain organisational PO in large companies, with P10, 12, 14, 19 and 20 all demonstrating this attachment. P19 neatly sums up the potential impact if organisations embed a culture where individuals feel like owners:

> *“ the way we are treated as employees, it makes it feel like it’s my business as well. So when I'm thinking of the outcomes, I'm thinking of the business…as well. So it’s not just about me keeping my position, it’s about me benefitting the company.” P19*

These feelings of attachment to the organisation, led to the desire, not only to do the best for themselves, but also do their best for the organisation, to essentially think like an owner.

Many described themselves in terms of ‘ambassadors’ for the organisation, including P5, who understood he wasn’t in the right role for him, but still felt responsibility towards the organisation:

“cause obviously, image and reputation you're, you're the face of the company at the end of the day. And although there are people behind you, you're the ones interacting with the customers. So yeah, I did feel like it was my job to represent XXX umm and it was our job to make sure that the business was continuing to grow.” P5

Organisations can build a sense of belonging with individuals at the start of their career and show them how to act as ambassadors for the organisation and to take responsibility. Most of these individuals were keen to do this (P1,2,3,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14, 16, 17,18, 19, 20) and even those such as P4 and P15, who showed less attachment to the organisation, were still acting as owners.

As mentioned in the “giving ownership” section, employers 2 and 3 highlighted how they tried to expand job role ownership to consider other organisational targets, such as the team or organisation. This was partly about helping WPS understand the bigger picture and the impact of their work on the business, but also helping them feel that sense of belonging towards the business and their team:

> “Showing how those people and what they do and the actions that they have, how they aid the progress of, not just tasks, but also the progress of the business…helping them feel important and feel part of it” E3

As well as ownership being informally embedded via supervisors and teams, there were also some formal activities which cemented the company ownership ethos. For example, P19 was given or was permissioned to find missions or projects which created benefits to the organisation. His final placement presentation about his achievements was linked to opportunities for progression onto the graduate programme, and thus benefitted the WPS to take ownership of missions.

Both E2’s and E3’s organisation used the appraisal process for formalising ownership. E3’s organisation bought in external HR people to manage the process, using it as a means of showing they valued the individual’s

contribution, as well as providing constructive feedback. E2's organisation asked WPS to demonstrate quarterly documentary evidence of their achievements, which E2 believed encouraged ownership in these inexperienced employees.

To conclude, some WPS were able to feel organisational PO in addition to job-related PO, which, given the brief time period that they worked in the organisation, demonstrates that early attachment is possible and this was particularly true in SME's. Nonetheless, some WPS with strong job-related PO found it harder to bind themselves to larger organisations to develop organisational PO, although it wasn't entirely clear what the reasons were. Once again, PO is more nuanced than previously advocated and, whilst studies have shown that job-related PO is not always a predictor of organisational PO (Pierce et al. 2004; Mayhew et al. 2007), especially in multi-national organisations, further qualitative and quantitative studies would be beneficial. Nevertheless, there may also be a new form of PO which could impact on these attachments, which will be covered in the coming section.

4.13 Bringing the Themes Together: Discussion

This study sought to explore the development of PO in individuals at the start of their career using a sample of work placement students from a post 1992 university. This section joins together the four key themes identified in this chapter.

Early research by Pierce and colleagues (2001, 2003; 2004) suggested that individuals can become attached to certain workplace targets via a process involving PO motives, routes, values and target attributes which this study concurs with. There have been a significant number of studies since this point, yet most have tended to overlook this complexity in order to address other PO elements. This qualitative study has returned to the initial conceptualisation to further our understanding of the intricacies of PO development using early career professionals on a year-long work placement as the basis for this study. PO studies have traditionally used experienced professionals for studies and the researcher believes this study is unusual in highlighting the experiences of participants who are both new to the workplace and in a contract role.

This study has highlighted how early participants may develop ownership of tasks with the majority of WPS providing examples of task-related ownership within their first three months. At this point, some WPS also demonstrated job-related PO, although both employers and PDAs interviewed concurred that full job-related PO often took between three and six months.

A few individuals showed ownership of their tasks from day one (even before ownership had been permissioned) with employer 3, highlighting how a new placement student suggested the inclusion of a new slide on her first day:

> *"On her first day, she took an ownership of that. She didn't just do what I told her to do, she took ownership of it. She received it and she said, okay, this is mine now, I've got a framework but if I've got an idea, I'm going to put it in there". Employer 3*

It is therefore plausible, that in the same way that we attach ourselves quickly to favourite possessions even if we know they will not last a lifetime (a new car that is changed every few years for example), so ECPs may have strong attachments to intangible targets if there is self-congruity and/or if they have prior ownership experiences (in education, a part time job etc). The attachment might be fleeting or long lasting, but there may be a strength of feelings.

The strong theme of "giving" ownership emerged demonstrating a dynamic iterative, relational process initially permissioned for small tasks, then utilising a building block approach to larger, more intricate tasks. In this study, this was the most successful form of creating early ownership. When supervisors and the organisational culture permissioned a WPS with ownership over tasks this facilitated the development of competence, confidence, trust and a professional identity resulting in eventual "taking" ownership of their job role. This is far earlier than originally suggested (Pierce et al. 2003) and demonstrates to employers that it is possible for those at the start of their career or in contract roles to form early attachments to their job role if provided with immediate ownership opportunities. Also unexpectedly, given these individuals were working in a "contract" type role, that this was a short-term role seemed to make no difference to the WPS ability to attach themselves to workplace targets.

Self and material targets are closely entwinned (Belk 1988; Ferraro et al. 2011) and this is also true of immaterial targets such as work-related targets. Moreover, it was the social construction of "giving" ownership which most frequently facilitated a speedier development of job-related PO and the ECPs emerging professional identities. The interweaving of ingredients such as previous ownership experience, opportunities to fulfil motives, access to PO routes, the permissioning and trusting of ownership via the supervisor, organisational culture, target attributes, job crafting, rituals, values/personality traits (Pierce et al. 2003) as well as context all seem to play a part in PO development highlighting both its complexity and interplay between the self and other individuals.

Expected ownership was signalled by some organisations during the recruitment process allowing WPS to understand the level of responsibility and accountability that they might expect whilst in a work placement. Induction and handover periods were often full of rituals that underpin this process of "giving" ownership. Handover books were identity leaden and some organisations skilfully bonded the WPS and the organisation through team activities and rituals relating to the organisation.

It was most frequently the supervisor who facilitated an organisational culture of "giving" ownership. E3 suggested how he managed the " giving and taking" ownership process with WPS:

> *"it's accepting that it's on their desk now, they've got to look after it, they have to make it better. Yes, they have to stay within the lines, but it's theirs, they don't necessarily have to refer back to somebody for everything they do." E3*

E2 concurred, suggesting she clearly denotes a handover of tasks *"it's very much, off you go XXX"* (E2) thus transferring ownership. P19's organisation facilitated ownership transfer via "missions" which were either given to the WPS or they could suggest their own missions. Check-ins with supervisors were available if requested, but essentially the WPS were required to *"drive your own success."* (P19).

Those organisations signalling a strong ownership culture seemed to embed a controlled “sink or swim” mentality whereby individuals were supported to take control of their job role and opportunities within the organisation. This facilitated early opportunities to invest psychic energy into their job role/projects by crafting, controlling, caring and mastering (Sartre 1956; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Belk 1988; Ahuvia 2005; Mittal 2006; Watkins et al. 2015) building block targets entwinning self and job role until the target became “theirs”. WPS who felt trusted by their supervisor's suggested greater confidence in their ability and skills. This study concurs with Olckers and Enslin (2016a) regarding the important role that trust plays within PO, although whether this is as part of psychological safety as Zhang (2020) suggests or independent of other safety components requires further research. For early career professionals, trust seems to play a role in supervisor validation.

If ownership was permissioned by the supervisor, the WPS then had the opportunity to accept or reject ownership. Whilst it was rare for individuals to outright reject ownership, there was a strength continuum whereby some individuals accepted, took and developed job- related ownership to a greater degree than others. P1,2, 4, 10, 11, 12, 15 and 19 were in positions where ownership was permissioned, and they grabbed it. P5, 14, 17 and 20 were given ownership, but did not demonstrate the same strength of ownership as the first group. P6, 7, 8, 9, 16 and 18 worked in organisations where ownership did not seem to be embedded in the organisational culture and permissioning was sporadic as was the strength of their ownership. As discussed in the trust section, P3 and P13 were often not fully permissioned ownership and the “giving” of ownership seemingly became contaminated. When ownership is given reluctantly or with caveats, this studies results would suggest that it hampers the ownership process with the receiver then demonstrating less ownership and less trust in the giver. Again this is likely to mirror our relationship with possessions, whereby sometimes, offered ownership comes with caveats which holds back the receiver from that crucial self investment.

Pierce and colleagues (2001, 2003; 2004) suggest that personality and values are likely to also play a role in PO development and whilst this was not the focus of the study, this may be particularly true of those individuals who take

ownership. In this study, self-efficacy seemed to be an important key factor to initiate taking ownership as stressed by both employers and PDAs:

> "people that are confidence enough will take ownership…You get your people that don't have the confidence…they won't volunteer, because they're scared, they're gonna mess it up…won't touch it with a barge pole…that's important, isn't it? Yeah, confidence that ownership is taken, sometimes. And it's also given, it works both ways." PDA2

Previous work placement studies also suggest the importance of self efficacy and how a placement may facilitate its development ((Edwards 2014b; Inceoglu et al. 2019; Mele et al. 2021). Employer two suggested that recognition from supervisors and other team members developed confidence and from that point individuals were more open to suggesting new ideas, job crafting as part of taking ownership *"So that obviously builds their confidence"* (E2). This again points towards the social construction of ownership with relational aspects building WPS self-efficacy. Previous studies (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Liu et al. 2012; Brown et al. 2014b; Morewedge 2021) have ascertained the importance of some PO routes to develop ownership feelings and this study did see examples of all previously posited PO routes (control, self investment, self congruity and psychological safety, although fewer examples of intimate knowledge perhaps due to the time scales).

"Taking ownership" often involved WPS crafting their job role and in some instances moving the relational boundaries of the tasks or networks. Job crafting therefore seems to play a role facilitating PO development providing a "bottom up" approach of worker control and self investment rather than just the top-down process of job design highlighted by Pierce et al. (2009a); Peng and Pierce (2015). Good job design will contribute to opportunities for ownership, provide job-related rituals and allows organisations to facilitate PO through the suggested routes, nonetheless opportunities for forms of job crafting may be more important.

When ownership was consistently given to WPS, "taking ownership" became embedded in the mindset in some WPS and especially if the individual felt they

could improve on a task or process or had a greater level of expertise than other members of the team/ department. P17 felt that his strong excel knowledge provided him with an opportunity to take on tasks to automate the organisations systems. He suggested *"it feels like I've become part of the office's history almost"* indicating that roles and not just possessions have biographies or social lives (Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005). P17 was the WPS who most frequently mentioned the importance of belonging and demonstrates how "taking" ownership even when not given can have a significant impact on an individual's feelings of being part of something. Ownership may play out as a narrative through someone's life and if they believe this relates to their self-identity, this may be maintained via the self-congruity route (Morewedge 2021).

Some individuals had previous ownership experience, and this was another form of transference that occurred in the development of PO. Whilst this was found in several WPS it may partly explain why those at the start of their career were able to "take" ownership if it wasn't given. P7 was a team leader in a part time job role and suggested that she was used to controlling workloads and taking responsibility:

> *"I was team leader and I definitely felt a lot of ownership. I had a lot to look after, um, I had task to—actually I had targets to complete, and I was basically in-charge of what I had to do, um, so I felt a lot of ownership and I had a lot of responsibility and that's a lot more than I have at XXX"* P7

Nevertheless, P7 felt that she wasn't given as much responsibility in her role compared to some other WPS which may have been why she sought opportunities such as her organisation providing a formal placement scheme. When asked what she would change about her work placement she suggested *"probably the amount of responsibility that I'm given" (P7).*

However historical examples of ownership in a part time roles did not always lead to job-related PO on placement such as P3. Given the poor relationship with her supervisor where ownership wasn't permissioned, it does demonstrate that not only can PO be contextual , if ownership is not "given" then ownership opportunities may be blocked. If the supervisor doesn't permission ownership, it could be anxiety inducing for the WPS . P3 who struggled with her

supervisor, felt she showed ownership by reminding the team of key deadlines and email requests *"it's not me being bossy, if I tell you that you've missed something or forgotten something"* (P3). Whilst this may seem like a small form of ownership, this quote is an example of someone who has lost confidence trying to justify this act of control and self investment. Whilst more experienced professionals might be able to navigate around this, this may be challenging for others, particularly those inexperienced regarding "how work works".

As suggested by Van Dyne and Pierce (2004); Mayhew et al. (2007) feelings of job-related PO do not always build feelings of organisational PO and this study concurs. However, that simplifies a complex relationship with a number of factors playing a part. Whilst organisational PO was developed by WPS working in SME's in line with the research of Bernhard and O'Driscoll (2011), the organisation as a PO target in large organisations was less easy to manipulate and felt more distant. Nevertheless lack of organisational PO did not necessarily mean that WPS didn't feel a sense of affective or organisational commitment, rather, those feelings were just not as strong as they were for such a malleable target such as the job role.

Nevertheless in some instances, WPS were still very positive about their organisation with three of the four WPS working for international employer 2, feeling some level of organisational PO:

> *"I definitely identify with the company… it's a place that, not call home, but a good work environment that I'm happy to be part of."* P20

Whilst the job was the key target for most WPS, P9 and P10 felt comparatively strong organisational PO. P9 was particularly unusual as organisational PO developed first. Whilst he felt totally committed to the organisation and saw himself working there for many years post-graduation, he did not seem to show any job crafting behaviours, nor a desire to invest himself in the role:

> *"For me, personally, I haven't…So I'm just absorbing as much as I can. I haven't gotten feedback on how I feel the systems can do any better, because I haven't done anything like this before" P9*

This experience was an anomaly. A tentative suggestion may be that when an individual identifies so strongly with an organisation, the job role becomes secondary, but further research in this area would be interesting.

Feeling PO to the job role can provide great pleasure as well as pain. There is a duality of outcomes relating to PO which organisations and individuals need to be aware of. There are the many posited positive PO outcomes which were also observed in this study including job satisfaction, self-esteem, affective commitment, in-role performance, pro-active work behaviour and job engagement (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Mayhew et al 2007; Avey et al. 2009: Avey et al.2012; Knapp et al.2014; Peng and Pierce 2015; Wang et al. 2018; Zhang 2020) all of which makes PO so beneficial for both individuals and their organisations.

Pierce et al. (2001) suggests that PO is pleasure producing and the intensity of feelings suggested by the WPS demonstrated the many highs that are achieved when ownership is taken by an ECP. It is worth remembering those highs are partly a result of socially sanctioned praise and it was the circle of validation that helped WPS develop greater confidence and pride in their work.

Taking responsibility for their job role or a project often resulted in feelings of excitement and exhilaration linking to both self efficacy and self-identity. By investing self and entwining control, care or other forms of psychic energy, they were able to become “one” with the target and so the pride felt when successfully managing something complex was so much the greater. These are new, inexperienced employers who experienced great personal satisfaction and joy when success first came.

This pleasure also built confidence which resulted in the WPS sharing more ideas and taking on more responsibility. This is a win-win for individuals and organisations who both gain something when an employee is able to add value. By feeling responsible for targets some individuals also felt a sense of achievement and purpose.

Nonetheless, this sense of responsibility can have negative implications with the “weight of PO” also mentioned and it did seem to result in high stress levels in some instances. There seemed a genuine concern of letting people down and this combined with a fear of failure meant that some of these WPS

internalised stress rather than talking to their line managers. For those WPS who seemed to show high levels of ownership, their lives were consumed by this ownership demonstrating that for some whilst PO can have many positive implications, for others, this desire to possess can be all consuming and take over an individual's life if not properly managed. Given the move to working from home, this may be less observable to line managers and so organisations may need to identify early career professionals who demonstrate high levels of ownership to ensure that this shadow side does not become all consuming.

P15 sums up how job PO possessed him:

> *"This is something that I've really had to battle with…I think I always want to do the best…it means that I sometimes did work too hard and I was over-tired and it got to the point where my parents even got involved and said, you really need to just manage your workload"* P15

Whilst P15 was an extreme example, he was not alone in feeling the weight of PO (P4, 10, 12 and 20) and often those who felt the most pleasure, also felt the most pain. The weight of responsibility can be initially positive because it can feel empowering, but there is a tipping point when this responsibility became too heavy. Whilst the pain side of PO impacted on individuals more than organisations, it feels likely that this could eventually become stress related if not managed and so it is in everyone's best interest to manage the dichotomy of PO.

There was also examples of ephemerality or liquid ownership (Fleura Bardhi et al. 2012) which has been shown to relate to tangible possessions. Work placements are temporal which suggest that WPS attachments would be weaker, although the results from this study suggest otherwise. Counterintuitively whilst attachments could be strong, they could also be fleeting, with some participants strategically managing their career desires ahead of their cherished work placement. It is unclear if this is liquidity in action or the strength of a PO target which is close to the WPS heart (career PO), but the PDAs all recognised this contradiction as one that they now see when meeting WPS.

The disinvestment of job roles and organisations to allow these participants to return to their studies highlights the biographical nature of PO being both part of the participant's memoirs, but also becoming part of the life history of a particular job role, team, department or organisation. Individuals do not just disappear from these life accounts, but live on through their actions, other people's memories and their shared activities. Disinvestment could be painful, but in many instances, those WPS who were given ownership, now gave ownership to others. Where ownership is embedded, ownership lives on through its rituals, it's essence and individuals desire to find something that is part of their soul. Moving from being permissioned ownership to "giving ownership" to others seemed to help the disinvestment process, although this is only a tentative observation.

This group of participants have grown up in a world where they are told to take control of their career as there are "no jobs for life" and this socially constructed rhetoric plays a role in how they view work related targets. Whilst they had strong attachments to their job role and for some (especially in SME's) to the organisation, these ECP feelings could also be fleeting with an element of liquidity towards job role and organisational targets. Employers in the future may expect to see forms of ownership, which are strong, but ephemeral, characterised by affective emotions that seem solid, but can quickly become fluid. This may also partly be due to a new proposed work place target, career ownership. For some this was ultimate work-related target because it is part of the essence of themselves and therefore the most accessible and controllable, allowing stability and permanence in an ever-changing world. Career ownership is both rational, career planning, as well as an affective feeling of "mine" which means that it can be less about meaningful work than a Protean career and for some, the desire for stability suggests differences to a Boundaryless career.

This desire for stability amongst the participants was demonstrated when considering their next career steps, with the WPS still generally preferring access to a graduate scheme (often with their placement provider) as their first step post-graduation. Narratives around graduate schemes play strong to this group of participants with societal influences such as family, universities and

organisational role models extolling the many benefits of this route. Liquid ownership and career PO are socially constructed for a generation who have been told there are no jobs for life. This creates tension between notions of stability within an organisation against the strategy of driving their own career success. It is no wonder that to the outside world they show deep attachments yet a desire to quickly move on, they are a product of societies' mixed messages. This along with the pandemic's impact on the way we work, may move career PO and liquidity to the forefront of these young professional's minds. Nonetheless career PO needs further research to ascertain if it can be called a PO target although it is potentially a really exciting area for future research.

Previous PO research has not considered how ownership is transferred to individuals and this study is the first to consider that PO may be "given" to individuals and/or "taken" by individuals. As these participants are early career professionals, giving and taking ownership may be more relevant at this particular work life stage, however given how much time and money are invested in talent pipelines it may be fruitful for organisations and supervisors to understand how job-related PO may develop at other levels. It should not be assumed that more experienced workers would naturally take ownership nor that inexperienced employees may not. Whilst organisations may suggest that developing ownership in individuals who are in temporary roles is not a priority, this process of "giving ownership" is transferable to all individuals at the start of their career. As this research indicates, some organisations already weave ownership into their organisational culture and whilst there are also negative implications (discussed in section 4.11.2) there can also be many benefits for both organisation and individual.

By exploring the findings from this study, a new relational model of job-related PO development in Early Career Professionals (figure 5) has been produced demonstrating the key elements involved in the process. But first a reminder of the original PO model created by the author to signify current PO research which was shown in section 2.15 (figure 5):

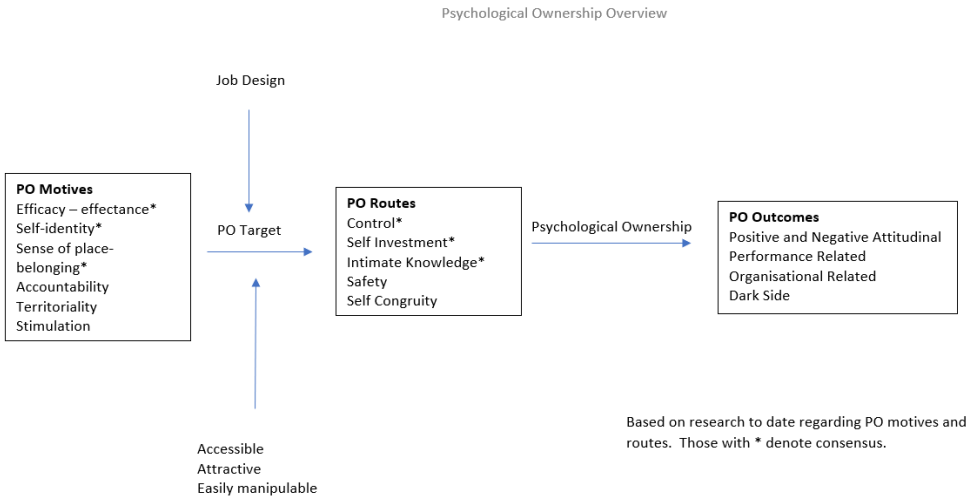

Figure 5: Psychological Ownership Overview

The new relational model of job-related PO development in Early Career Professionals demonstrates the key elements involved in the giving and taking ownership process. This study concurs with Pierce et al (2003) who suggested not all motives and routes were required to activate PO, nonetheless what is important is the permissioning of ownership (usually by the supervisor) and an ownership culture which allows the taking of ownership via the most pertinent routes. Whilst this new ownership model is based on early career professionals there are many aspects of this model such as rituals, opportunities for job crafting and trust that organisations may wish to consider as part of "giving and taking" organisational culture. In fact, the "giving" of ownership becomes a ritual in itself if it is continuously embedded in an organisational culture. In a similar form to other models, this doesn't truly demonstrate the complexity, dynamic and iterative nature of this process that we find in all human interaction, rather an indication of core ingredients and a basic recipe.

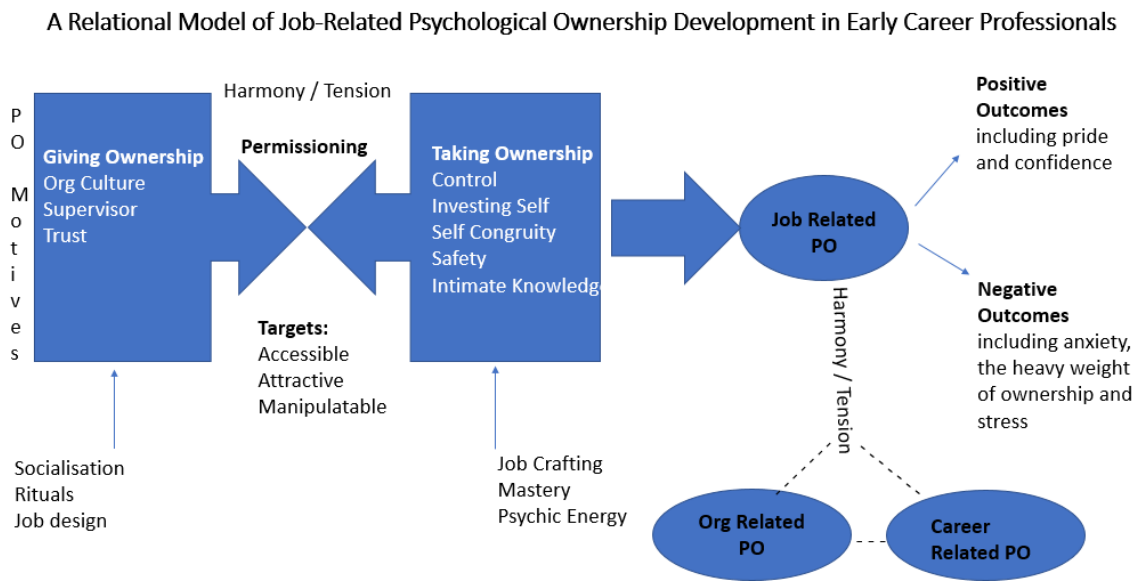

Figure 6: Job-related PO Development in Early Career Professionals

The broken lines indicate where there may be a relationship, although the strength and direction of this relationship are likely to vary. Figure 7 below, then shows the key differences between the two models in red denoting either PO development additions or where there was little reference to them from participants in this study. That is not to say that they are not part of PO, rather that they were not demonstrated, or were less significant in this study.

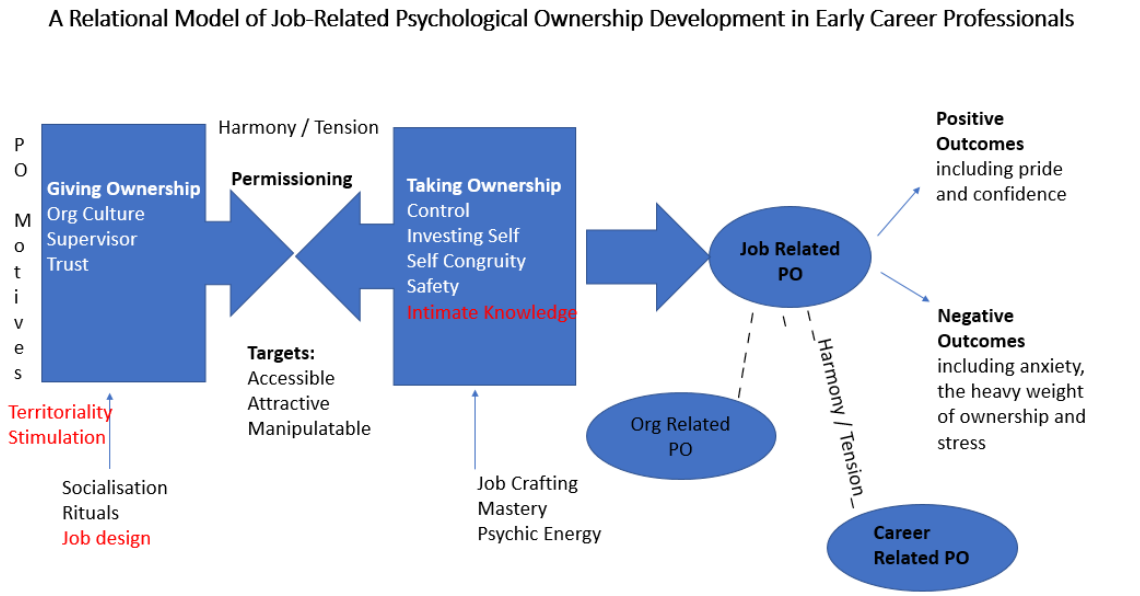

Figure 7. Comparison of PO Development in Early Career Professionals

This chapter has presented the findings from this study indicating a relational aspect of PO which has been missing from previous studies. By concentrating on a group of early career professionals there has been the opportunity to ascertain PO development at the start of a career and has resulted in a new relational PO model demonstrating job-related PO development in early career professionals.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This chapter draws together the final conclusions and recommendations relating to PO development in early career professionals. This study was undertaken due to the researcher's previous experiences working with both early career professionals and students in the classroom, leading her to believe that PO research to date had neglected a key time period when PO can be shaped and developed.

Firstly, this chapter will address the completion of the study objectives, before demonstrating the study's contribution to knowledge and key recommendations to stakeholders. This chapter will conclude with future research directions and a final reflection from the researcher.

This study aimed to explore the development of work-related PO in individuals at the start of their career, using a sample of work placement students from a post-1992 university via four key objectives:

5.1 Objective one: To explore the formation of work-related psychological ownership in individuals at the start of their career.

To address the first objective, qualitative research was undertaken.

That individuals can develop PO for job-related targets has already been established. However, previous organisational PO research had not considered ***how*** ownership is transferred between individuals. This study is the first to consider the manner in which PO is socially constructed in the workplace, allowing individuals to develop job-related PO.

Through semi-structured interviews with WPS, employers and PDAs, the author confirmed that job-related PO was the most accessible form of work-related attachment and thus most of the research in this study is concentrated in this area.

The study found that the majority of WPS in this study were able to demonstrate **job-related PO** during their work placement. Both the employers

and PDAs interviewed concurred, with most participants providing examples of **task-related PO** within three months. This is earlier than previous research had suggested (Pierce et al. 2001,2003,2004), demonstrating that early attachments can be developed and nurtured. There was however a myriad of differences in the WPS experiences, relating to timings, how ownership was developed and perceived strength of feelings, which had not previously been demonstrated.

The conceptual model developed from this research demonstrates how job-related ownership is "given" and "taken" between WPS and their supervisors or team members. Section 4.13 provides the relational model of the development of job-related PO in early career professionals. Supervisors permissioned ownership through utilising a building block approach, initially via small tasks, building up to the entire job role. This sounds a relatively simple activity, nevertheless this is a socially constructed process often requiring an organisational culture where ownership is ritually embedded and a supervisor who sanctions "giving" ownership demonstrating trust in their incumbent. Organisational culture had not been considered in the context of previous PO research, nor the role of the immediate manager, although there is some research relating to transformational, authentic and ethical leadership (Avey et al. 2012; Alok 2014; Park et al. 2015).

WPS were then able to "take" job-related ownership via the posited routes of control, psychological safety, self-congruity and self-investment (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003; Pierce et al. 2004; Zhang 2020; Morewedge et al. 2021) and through a suggested new route of 'job crafting'. Previous studies have highlighted the top-down influence of job design (Pierce et al. 2009b; He and Pierce 2015), rather than considering the bottom-up approach of job crafting.

Attachments to work targets could be instantaneous if the target was congruent with the individual but was strengthened by the constant re-enactment of crafting and controlling entire processes or job roles aided by a circle of validation from supervisors and team members facilitating professional identities. There were differences in how much ownership the WPS "took" reminding us that there will be different degrees of workplace ownership taken.

Some WPS “took” ownership without prior permissioning, having experienced ownership previously in part-time job roles or education. Nevertheless, it was more likely that WPS required initial agreement before feeling confident to suggest new ideas or job craft to a significant level.

This study was taken with a backdrop of liminality as the student participants moved from student to professional identities. Attachments to the job role seem to hasten border-hoping to become a professional and a tentative conclusion would be that job-related PO can aid liminal processes in early career professionals. Liminality is also dynamic and intricate, requiring an iterative process of identity development. “Taking” PO may help these ECPs “try on” different identities as they job craft to find the elements of the role that fit.

Nevertheless, conclusions were reached that not all individuals developed job-related PO and it was found to be weak and sporadic in WPS where the culture of the organisation did not encourage ownership, the supervisor blocked ownership development (consciously or unconsciously), or if the WPS felt a lack of trust, perceived organisational support or organisational justice. WPS confidence was also important.

Whilst most of the study relates to the job role, this study concurs with previous studies (Pierce et al. 2004; Mayhew et al. 2007) which suggest that attachment to the organisation is not necessarily nested within the job role. Those working at SMEs were more likely to feel a stronger organisational attachment than those working in larger organisations where the organisation is more abstract. Finally, a new workplace target was identified (‘career ownership’) which will be discussed further in objective three.

This study fulfils objective one by demonstrating that job-related PO develops via a dynamic, relational, iterative, complex process, in which employees both “give” and “take” ownership. The ownership process may be emotion-laden with previous experiences, personal feelings and values from both giver and taker eliciting a significant level of complexity. This is a social exchange which can be fraught with sentiment that can allow the transfer of ownership to become confused. Yet, when it is managed successfully and expectations are clear, there are benefits to both the individual and organisation.

5.2 Objective two: To uncover the positive and negative outcomes suggested from the participant's experience of job-related psychological ownership

Objective two was also completed via semi-structured interviews with WPS, employers and PDAs.

This study saw examples of the pleasurable side of PO highlighted in section 4.11.1. The strength of feelings that ownership could provide was akin to first love at times, providing great happiness, pride and confidence instilled by external validation. As suggested by other scholars (Van Dyne and Pierce 2004; Mayhew et al.2007; Avey et al.2009; Avey et al. 2012; Knapp et al. 2014; Peng and Pierce 2015; Wang et al. 2018; Zhang 2020; Henssen and Koiranen 2021), PO has positive individual and organisational benefits which this study concurs with.

Nonetheless, this study demonstrates the dichotomy of PO for individuals, with job-related attachments providing great pleasure, but also pain. Whilst individuals who felt high levels of ownership gained great job satisfaction, sometimes a sense of purpose with their work achievements stretching beyond expectations of WPS, they also experienced the greatest "weight of ownership". These individuals often had high expectations of themselves as well as being aware of the esteem felt by the team. This creates pressure and because these WPSs had little experience of the workplace and seemed less able to raise fears of being overwhelmed with supervisors, it resulted in them carrying the weight of PO on their shoulders. This was particularly true for those individuals who developed strong feelings whereby the intensity of PO caused them simultaneously to feel great pleasure and pain.

Whilst topics related to stress and mental health have gained prominence in the workplace, those new to the workplace or in contract roles / short-term assignments may feel obliged to hide the weight of ownership due to the precarious nature of their position or fear of letting others down.

In conclusion, objective two has been fulfilled by demonstrating the duality of PO in early career professionals, where the pleasure and pain of PO can be

interrelated. The completion of objectives one and two are the basis for the relational model of job-related PO development in ECPs .

5.3 Objective three: To identify areas where qualitative research can add value to Psychological Ownership studies

As previously alluded to, PO research has mainly been conducted from a positivist perspective using the survey method to ascertain if individuals have PO for organisational targets such as their job role. This has helped develop our understanding of PO and in particular PO antecedents.

Nonetheless, this **qualitative study** has provided a very different perspective of PO highlighting the relational experience whereby PO can be developed *by* people and *between* people. A strong social element was found in this study, demonstrating the influence of line managers, senior managers and some team members. This could be in many forms from role modelling, organisational rituals, but most frequently via the permissioning of ownership ("giving ownership"). Whilst this study's population was individuals at the start of their career and thus is situated in a particular context, the process of giving and taking ownership may be demonstrated at most work levels, highlighting the importance of an organisational culture that permissions ownership. Whilst some individuals may have the confidence, experience and desire to take ownership, this study does explain the challenges faced by individuals in organisations where ownership is not the norm. If line managers or the organisation "lend" ownership, do not permission the taking of ownership, contaminate the ownership relationship, or actively hold on to ownership targets themselves (consciously or unconsciously), it appears difficult for an incumbent to take ownership, especially at the start of their career.

This qualitative study provides some indication of the socially constructed nature of PO and the intricacies involved in such a dynamic process. PO motives, PO conditions and the giving and taking of ownership are interwoven, with each experience being different because of the context and human relations. Qualitative research paints a picture of this complexity and the interactive relationships, which is not possible with quantitative research.

Silverman (2011) suggests that research cannot mirror the social world, but we can observe people bringing meaning to their world. Whilst previous PO studies have determined some of the positive and negative outcomes of PO, statistics cannot tell the lived experiences of PO and in particular the weight of PO. Qualitative research captures these experiences and emotions, making it easier to communicate the pain sometimes felt by individuals.

Whilst this study could never be truly inductive because of the researcher's prior knowledge of PO, the open-ended questions used in this study provided new areas to investigate. Job crafting has had limited recognition in previous PO studies, yet seems to be an important component when "taking" ownership. The more opportunities for the different forms of job crafting, the greater the number of opportunities for control and self-investment.

Open ended questions also demonstrated the benefits of this qualitative study by highlighting a possible new work-related target, that of **career PO**. An open-ended question such as, "My study is about psychological ownership. What does ownership in the workplace mean to you?" elicited unexpected responses. If we consider James (1890) quote, *"A man's Self is the sum total of all that he can call his"*, aside from the gender inequity of the statement, PO and our possessions is about personal choice. For those who feel strongly about their career, this attachment became stronger than the attachment to the job role. Some participants loved their job, but already had a career plan and this became their priority. Whilst further research is required to consider this potential PO target, section 4.12.2 highlights that whilst it may be closely aligned to boundaryless and protean careers, career PO is conceptually, a different construct. Importantly, this construct may not have been considered without an inductive mindset and demonstrates the lovely surprises that using a different method may bring.

Nevertheless, one of the challenges of this study was the inability to compare "apples with apples" at times in the literature review or results section, because PO for this study was viewed from a different lens. This made the results section challenging at times, akin to reading directions when your road map only documents certain roads. On the other hand, qualitative research in this instance did reveal many interesting new facets, allowing future researchers

the opportunity to consider the more relational aspects of PO, which feels essential to bring diversity to our understanding of PO.

5.4 Objective four: To provide a framework for how PO may be utilised and developed by organisations and their key stakeholders (e.g., line managers, HR).

Objective four is answered in the "giving ownership" workplace framework below and links to the recommendations for employers, ECPs and education providers which can be found in section 5.5. The COLTOS "Giving Ownership" framework acts as a reminder of the key elements relating to the "giving ownership" process:

COLTOS "Giving Ownership" Framework

Control, self investment and job-crafting opportunities

Organisational culture facilitating ownership

Line manager "giving" ownership

Trust and other forms of psychological safety

Opportunities for self-congruity

Stress management systems in place

Organisations may need to ascertain to what extent they have an ownership work culture and/or if it is something that they wish to develop. Ownership cultures may be significantly different in some organisational cultures, but if there is a desire for staff to feel job-related PO, organisations need to create a "giving ownership" culture at all levels within the organisation.

Whilst the new framework does not include organisational PO, by building job-related PO in an organisation, fulfilling the PO motives and providing social referents, there are opportunities to simultaneously strengthen feelings of organisational PO. This is particularly true in an ownership organisational culture which encourages individuals to take ownership in a psychologically safe environment.

5.5 Recommendations

The following recommendations link to the COLTOS “Giving ownership” framework, but also provide some broader suggestions for education providers, early career professionals, employers and researchers.

5.5.1 Educational Providers

Recommendations relating to early career professionals and PO from an education perspective are as follows:

Educate students about psychological ownership, including its positive and negative implications, to help them gain a sense of how ownership may affect their lives.

The COLTOS model may also be applicable to Programme Leaders and Unit Leaders to provide a framework or starting point for those starting university. Given that many Business Schools encourage group work, it may be helpful for students to understand how to “give” and “take” ownership in a similar manner to the workplace, helping them understand the relational nuances of group work. PO could then be reintroduced with second-year students to consider ownership in the workplace ahead of any work placements or internships.

Education providers may wish to help students understand the terminology within job descriptions to ascertain expected ownership levels. Decoding an organisational culture can be challenging for the inexperienced and so practical advice may help students to read between the lines.

Whilst universities have directed more attention to the transition onto placement and back to university than in the past, more attention could be emphasised regarding liminality and being “betwixt and between” identities (Turner 2011) before and after the placement. In particular, the ownership many of the WPS developed on placementcould then be taken back to the final year of studies. Given that Universities emphasise the professional persona, do they do enough to encourage this new identity post placement or are students immediately plunged back into a student identity? Emphasising

how students can take control and investment in their Research Project may help returning students make the connections between different forms (work or study) of “taking” ownership.

Finally, those staff who visit students on placement should be aware of the weight of PO and recognise those WPS who may be susceptible. High ownership feelings can be managed and some early awareness may be beneficial to all.

5.5.2 Students/Early Career Professionals

Recommendations relating to students and other early career professionals and PO are as follows:

Students and ECPs may wish to reflect on their levels of self-efficacy and need for psychological safety in their first job role. Not all individuals are well suited to a “sink or swim mentality” when they first enter the workplace, however well supported this practice may be in an organisation. Therefore, ECPs may wish to consider “organisational fit” when job hunting. Individuals could consider how important ownership is to them when looking for a placement / internship / apprenticeship / graduate job role. Those individuals who feel they may develop high levels of ownership should look for organisations signalling responsibility within job roles.

ECPs are encouraged to take ownership to understand signals relating to their own well-being and take positive stress management actions such as talking to their line manager or placement tutor. If students understand the burden of ownership, they are more likely to signal the challenges faced.

ECPs may wish to use the building block approach from tasks to the job role to build confidence. They should then consider forms of job crafting to offer them means of investing self, remembering that there may be boundaries that they need to stay within. Building PO early in education or part-time work will also help the transition to the workplace.

5.5.3 Employers

Recommendations to employers mainly relate to the COLTOS framework. Nevertheless, there are some further recommendations relating to early career professionals (ECP) and PO which may be particularly pertinent for those in Senior Leadership positions and HR:

Organisations should follow the COLTOS “Giving Ownership” framework as a means of embedding ownership. A building block process within departments is likely to be the most successful initial form of developing ownership, starting with Departmental Heads “giving ownership” to staff they line manage and working downwards to other levels of management. Whilst this is a study about early career professionals, it may be relatively challenging for an individual line manager to give ownership in isolation and therefore embedding departmental ownership is most likely to develop the required organisational culture. This may take time depending on the organisation. If “giving ownership” becomes part of organisational rituals, such as the recruitment strategy, onboarding process, annual appraisals, there is a greater chance of being embedded within the organisation more quickly. Ownership is likely to be entrenched in an organisational culture if it is an organisational value with a ‘golden thread’ from recruitment process through to disinvestment processes. Rituals relating to ECPs, such as “handover books” between placement students, interns and apprentices, may provide peer to peer signalling which can also be important, but other forms of ritual signalling relating to organisational referents (Sluss et al. 2012) would also be beneficial.

Line managers are key to the “giving ownership” framework and the reality is that not all line managers naturally “give ownership”. Support is suggested via workshops to help line managers understand the “giving ownership” process to ensure ownership is clearly offered and permissioned. Trust and a supported “sink or swim” attitude allow the individual to learn from mistakes. As job-related PO is a socially constructed process, managers should not underestimate the intricacies it involves and should consider if they openly and trustingly give ownership or if historical experiences, such as borrowing ownership or contaminating ownership, could inadvertently play a part.

Secondly, role model exemplars are important to signpost how they permission ownership and trust. This can help other managers understand how to give ownership clearly and unconditionally in the workplace.

As previously mentioned, Line managers should provide building blocks for developing job-related PO for ECPs, starting with small tasks and building up to the whole job role. There should be opportunities for controlling the job role in particular and using the many forms of job crafting. Job crafting also helps to develop self-congruity by providing opportunities to alter the role or participate in projects that link to their identity. Self-congruity may also be important for moving between liminal boundaries and line managers play an important role in praising and building confidence by validating the ECPs' professional identity. In addition, if line managers signpost how building task ownership leads to individuals gaining future job-related PO, it may also help new employees see a mental "ownership road map".

Ensuring psychological safety of staff members and in particular developing stress management processes for early career professionals is particularly important. Fear of failure or letting down line managers may mean that ECPs do not indicate feelings of stress whilst still experiencing them. Nevertheless, the heavy weight of ownership can be felt at any level. Regular face to face opportunities for informal conversations will be helpful and also managing the workload given to ECPs in particular. Whilst further research is required, in this study, those who had a high work ethic and seemed to take ownership of a high workload, were more likely to feel the weight of PO on their shoulders and may require stress management plans.

Recommendations related to ECPs in the workplace in particular:

Given that ECPs are likely to experience liminality, rituals and role models to aid this identity change are even more crucial. Senior managers and HR should consider how rituals are embedded into a work placement, internship and/or apprenticeships to expediate the transition from student to professional. Role models at all levels, including peer groups, provide possible selves.

When considering suitable roles for ECPs, HR should advise teams to provide positions with opportunities to control and job craft. Flexible boundaries to job roles provide greater opportunities to invest self and gain role-self congruity.

Given hybrid working is likely to be the norm in many organisations in the future, consider line managers who are accessible for both face to face meetings, but also accessible in attitude. This is a key socialisation period and early career professionals need to be able to see role models demonstrating "how work works", but also feel supported.

ECPs need to feel supported to learn from mistakes and to not carry too heavy an ownership burden. HR need to ensure that there are check-in points away from the line manager which provide psychological safety.

5.5.4 Researchers

Most points relating to PO researcher can be found in the "future research directions" section. However, the point below refers more generally to researchers and thus feels more appropriate in the recommendations section.

A recommendation to researchers is that it can be beneficial to see constructs from a different perspective and we should actively encourage diversity of methods as well as other perspectives. Whilst in PO research there is a lack of qualitative research, in other disciplines it could equally be a lack of quantitative research.

5.6 Contributions to Knowledge

This study has made the following contributions to knowledge:

Firstly, by exploring the development of PO at the start of an individual's career using qualitative research, this thesis has provided much needed methodological diversity to an area almost solely focussed on quantitative research. By utilising a different method, it has highlighted how ownership is constructed through individuals and their organisation thus emphasising the strong relational and contextual elements of PO. This study indicates how PO can be socially constructed, which I believe is an important practical contribution for organisations and individuals. Nonetheless, this study also contributes knowledge about PO methods which is also important for the academic community.

Secondly, by focussing on an under-explored group of participants, this research contributes to our understanding of PO development. Through demonstrating the complex, iterative dynamism of PO, this study has demonstrated that job-related ownership can be both "given" and "taken" in organisations and has provided a "giving ownership" model, demonstrating this process in early career professionals. The use of a building blocks demonstrates how organisations can encourage ownership development of the job role, whilst job crafting ascertains how individuals may be able to take control. These are all areas where other researchers may wish to consider feasibility with more experienced staff members.

Thirdly, this study contributes to PO research by suggesting that job-related PO may be developed far quicker than previously suggested (Pierce et al. 2001, 2003) if the right conditions are in place, such as those previously mentioned. Some individuals may bring an ownership mindset from previous experiences (such as part-time work and education) and take ownership even when not always actively permissioned. In addition, by using an atypical group of participants, this study suggests that PO can be developed by those in short-term roles or transitory roles and so can still be effectively utilised with

contract or temporary staff. This builds on our knowledge of how PO can be developed by different groups of individuals.

By highlighting the role of job crafting, this study links PO to ways in which individuals adapt their role to build self-congruity and self-efficacy. Whilst job design is suggested to be an important, the bottom-up approach of job crafting allows opportunities for self-investment which seemed equally important to this group of ECPs.

This study highlights the duality of PO and how it can result in both pleasure and pain. In particular the "weight of PO" has not been explored in such detail and should remind both academic and organisational communities of PO's possible negative connotations. Given this was a group of ECPs, there may be some reluctance to discuss the weight of ownership and thus bringing it to the forefront may allow supervisors and HR departments to put in place strategies to manage individuals who demonstrate high levels of ownership.

Finally, a **contribution to professional practice** is that by providing a "giving ownership" framework, supervisors, HR teams and educators are able to put in place "giving ownership" techniques, which provide a structure for developing job related PO in the workplace. This is a practical contribution to knowledge but does provide a concrete structure to manage PO development.

5.7 Future Research Directions

There are so many fascinating areas for future research relating to PO, but further research into PO relating to selection and onboarding processes may demonstrate activities and rituals for early embedding of PO.

An obvious suggestion relates to the widening of PO research methods to ensure diversity of perspectives. Further qualitative studies would be welcomed, but the author believes there are also opportunities for mixed methodologies and the use of different technologies, such as digital data capture on social media. It would be beneficial for PO research to invoke the

same sort of methodological diversity as the possession and ownership literature which, whilst comparably diverse, still believes that further diversity is needed. PO is complex and therefore methodological diversity will provide a broader picture of its intricacies.

Secondly, a greater understanding of how PO develops at the early career stage is important. This is especially true post-pandemic, as hybrid working becomes more normalised. Pre-pandemic, interviews with WPS suggested that some participants really missed having a line manager who was frequently in the same building, through whom they could role model "how work works", who could help with "silly" questions, and with whom they could build a relationship. These elements seem important and further research in this area could ascertain if this still holds true in a hybrid workplace.

More ECP research into internships, graduate roles, apprenticeships as well as work placements, would be beneficial. Internships tend to last for 12 weeks, which may be insufficient to build any long-standing PO attachments, though this is just surmising. Further research in this area would help us understand how quickly attachments can be built, and long-term research would also ascertain if the attachments can last post-graduation and beyond. This study also suggests that PO can be developed quickly and therefore those organisations who employ contract staff could still facilitate the "giving" ownership process. Research into contract roles and the gig economy would also help build knowledge in this area. Nevertheless, further research would clarify a potential tipping point, at which the length of assignment (when all other factors suit PO development) impacts on an individual's ability to develop PO.

From a different perspective, qualitative studies between line managers and their staff at different levels would also allow us to see if "giving ownership" is important with other staff members. Does "giving ownership" stop at a certain level and is it replaced with another form of ownership permissioning? What happens if individuals "take ownership" that hasn't been permissioned? One of the line managers in this study talked about ownership boundaries, which

partly relates to job crafting. The author has already suggested further research relating to the role of job crafting in PO development.

One of the key quotes from this study was around the duality of ownership, “getting you up in the morning, but keeping you awake at night”, and again it would be interesting to consider the impact of being “possessed” by ownership of work-related targets.

This research also questions whether job crafting, rather than job design, is more important for job-related PO. Whilst job design might provide opportunities for autonomy and scope for PO, it may be the opportunity to job craft which ultimately feeds psychic energy and provides opportunities to make tasks, projects, or jobs “mine”. Whilst both elements may be important, the opportunity to personalise may supersede the work job design can do.

Outcomes of pride and confidence were also suggested in this study, which had not been discussed previously. These may be particularly pertinent to these new employees. Nevertheless, these are emotions that can be reflected across the working population, thus warranting further development. The strength of job-related PO also highlights the force of feelings that some of these ECPs seem to experience. In particular, some individuals felt the “weight” of ownership and whilst the burden of ownership has briefly been mentioned previously, this research suggests how much it can be felt in some ECPs, even in organisations that feel they support a culture of ownership.

Further research relating to the relational aspects of PO transfer would be beneficial, including the mechanisms which may stop job-related PO being developed. Additionally, whilst it is possible to take ownership of the job role, how does this fit with organisational PO?

Finally, this study has also introduced a new potential PO target, career-related PO, in which some individuals felt a strong attachment to their career, which could supersede other organisational targets because of the ease in which it can be accessed. Whilst some theorists may suggest that everyone feels ownership for their career, the author would suggest this is not true, as we see many who are unhappy with their career, yet make minimal efforts to

change it. In this study, different strengths of career-related PO were suggested, which sometimes might have a negligible impact on other PO targets, but in others seemed to suggest an intensity which would result in it becoming their main PO attachment. Further research in this area would be interesting. The inclusion of liquid PO also suggests how new generations with less access to full ownership of possessions, may start to reflect that thinking in their work life and this, combined with the notion of “no job for life”, may strengthen the career target as their one true target to be called “mine”.

5.8 Final Researcher Reflections

Ownership is a word that is frequently referred to, but its conceptualisation is rarely considered in any detail. As a word, its meaning is clear and so why overthink something which has reasonably obvious connotations?

Yet, because we are dealing with humans, the actual process of “giving and taking ownership” is both simple and complex. The ownership process may be emotion-laden with previous experiences, personal feelings and values from both giver and taker, eliciting a significant level of complexity. This is a social exchange which can be fraught with sentiment that can allow the transfer of ownership to become confused. Yet when it is managed successfully and expectations are clear, there are benefits to both the individual and organisation. I believe that helping people understand the relational aspects of PO can have a positive impact in the workplace, as long as the burden of ownership is understood.

On reflection, the research questions selected were not utilised effectively and were too similar to the research objectives. Anderson (2013) suggest scholarly disagreements relating to their use given that some researchers use one or the other rather than both. Nevertheless, the value of good research questions are that they can shape a studies direction (Agee 2009), frame particular curiosities and influence the studies methods (Andrews 2003). Sandberg and Alvesson suggest curiosity, imagination and reflexivity are required to craft original research questions from literature reviews, a notion which is similar to the FINER criteria of feasibility, interesting, novel, ethical and relevant (Hulley et al. 2013). Sandberg and Alvesson go on to suggest that research

questions are most likely to be derived from empirical research, literature reviews. personal experience and society. I used personal interest initially to consider the PO topic, however it was via the literature review, that directed this study towards the “novel” aspect of relational PO, although the research questions could have been more considered. Nevertheless, in the future the results from this study might give direction for future research questions such as:

- Can individuals feel psychological ownership for their career?
    - What factors influence the development of career PO?
    - What impact does career PO have on other work related PO targets if any?

- What influences the demise of psychological ownership towards work place targets?
    - How do individuals feel about the demise of psychological ownership towards work place targets?
    - How does the demise of psychological ownership for work place targets impact on work place relationships?

Overall, I have loved having the opportunity to question PO! At the start of this PHD, I wished that I had the opportunity to be a full-time student and immerse myself. However, now I feel lucky to complete this doctorate on a part-time basis. The analysis took a long time, but having to complete other tasks gave me the headspace to look at things in a different way. I feel that ultimately the study is stronger for this, although that of course is for others to judge.

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Appendices

Appendix One: Ethics Checklist

Bournemouth University

Research Ethics Checklist

About Your Checklist	
Ethics ID	27778
Date Created	31/07/2019 14:39:39
Status	Approved
Date Approved	06/08/2019 09:25:42
Date Submitted	31/07/2019 14:51:57
Risk	Low

Researcher Details	
Name	Deborah Taylor
Faculty	BU Business School
Status	Postgraduate Research (MRes, MPhil, PhD, DProf, EngD, EdD)
Course	Postgraduate Research - BUBS
Have you received funding to support this research project?	No

Project Details	
Title	The Development of Feelings of Ownership in the Workplace
Start Date of Project	01/01/2019
End Date of Project	30/06/2020
Proposed Start Date of Data Collection	06/08/2019
Original Supervisor	Lois Farquharson
Approver	Michael Silk

Appendix Two: Participant Information Form and Participant Agreement Form

Bournemouth University

Participant Information Sheet

The title of the research project

The Development of Feelings of Ownership in the Workplace

Invitation to take participate

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

What is the purpose of the project?

The purpose of this project is to ascertain how feelings of ownership for workplace targets such as a job role or the organisation may develop at the start of an individual's career. The study is looking in particular at individuals participating in a work placement during the third year of their degree.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you are currently undertaking a work placement.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a participant agreement form. You can withdraw from participation at any time and without giving a reason. If you decide to withdraw we will usually remove any data collected about you from the study. Once data collection activities have finished you can may still be able to withdraw your data up to the point where the data is analysed and incorporated into the research findings or outputs. At this point your data will usually become anonymous, so your identity cannot be determined, and it may not be possible to identify your data within the anonymous dataset. Withdrawing your data at this point may also adversely affect the validity and integrity of the research. Deciding to take part or not will not impact upon/adversely affect your treatment/care /education or studies at BU.

What would taking part involve?

Taking part would involve a semi structured interview during which you would be asked questions about your work placement.

What are the advantages and possible disadvantages or risks of taking part?

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will give researchers a greater understanding regarding the development of ownership feelings in the workplace and the positive and negative implications of such feelings.

What type of information will be sought from me and why is the collection of this information relevant for achieving the research project's objectives?

The type of questions that you will be asked will be concentrate on your work placement and may include questions about the skills you have developed and your feelings to workplace targets such as your job role or the organisation..

Will I be recorded, and how will the recorded media be used?

The audio and/or video recordings of your activities made during this research will be used only for analysis and the transcription of the recording(s) for illustration in conference presentations and lectures. No other use will be made of them without your written permission, and no one outside the project will be allowed access to the original recordings.

How will my information be kept?

All the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly in accordance with current data protection legislation. Research is a task that we perform in the public interest, as part of our core function as a university. Bournemouth University (BU) is a Data Controller of your information which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it appropriately.

Publication

You will not be identifiable in any external reports or publications about the research without your specific consent*. Otherwise your information will only be included in these materials in an anonymous form, i.e. you will not be identifiable.

Security and access controls

BU will hold the information we collect about you in hard copy in a secure location and on a BU password protected secure network where held electronically.

Retention of your data

All personal data collected for the purposes of this study will be held for one year after the award of the degree]. Although published research outputs are anonymised, we need to retain underlying data collected for the study in a non-anonymised form for a certain period to enable the research to be audited and/or to enable the research findings to be verified.

Contact for further information

If you have any questions or would like further information, please contact Deborah Taylor [dtaylor@bournemouth.ac.uk]

In case of complaints

Any concerns about the study should be directed to Lois Farquharson [lfarquharson@bournemouth.ac.uk]. If you decide to take part, you will be given a copy of the information sheet and a signed participant agreement form to keep.

Thank you for considering taking part in this research project.

Participant Agreement Form

Full title of project: The Development of Feelings of Ownership in the Workplace

Name, position and contact details of researcher: Deborah Taylor, Lecturer, dtaylor@bournemouth.ac.uk

Name, position and contact details of supervisor: Lois Farquharson, Deputy Dean, lfarquharson@bournemouth.ac.uk

To be completed prior to data collection activity

Section A: Agreement to participate in the study

You should only agree to participate in the study if you agree with all of the statements in this table and accept that participating will involve the listed activities.

I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet and have been given access to the BU Research Participant Privacy Notice which sets out how we collect and use personal information (https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/governance/access-information/data-protection-privacy).
I have had an opportunity to ask questions.
I understand that my participation is voluntary. I can stop participating in research activities at any time without giving a reason and I am free to decline to answer any particular question(s).
I understand that taking part in the research will include the following activity/activities as part of the research:
being audio recorded during the project
my words will be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research without using my real name.
I understand that, if I withdraw from the study, I will also be able to withdraw my data from further use in the study **except** where my data has been anonymised (as I cannot be identified) or it will be harmful to the project to have my data removed.
I understand that my data may be used in an anonymised form by the research team to support other research projects in the future, including future publications, reports or presentations.

	Initial box to agree
I consent to take part in the project on the basis set out above (Section A)	

Section B: The following parts of the study are optional

You can decide about each of these activities separately. Even if you do not agree to any of these activities you can still take part in the study. If you do not wish to give permission for an activity, do not initial the box next to it.

		Initial boxes to agree
	I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages and other research outputs. Please choose one of the following two options: I agree that my real name can used in the above. I do **not** agree that my real name can be used in the above.	

I confirm my agreement to take part in the project on the basis set out above.

Name of participant (BLOCK CAPITALS)	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Signature

Name of researcher (BLOCK CAPITALS)	Date (dd/mm/yyyy)	Signature

Appendix Three: Pilot Interview Questions

Pilot Interview

1. Tell me about your placement search and the process that took you to your placement at _____ company.

2. Can you tell me about your first week – did you have an induction/handover? Possible follow up questions:

3. What did they think of the job role/organisation?

4. Who were the key people that you initially met?

5. Tell me a little bit more about your job role and the organisation?
    a. Are there any elements that you have particularly enjoyed or struggled with?
    b. How has the job role changed over time?
    c. Have you adapted the job role in any way?
    d. How much autonomy do you believe you have over your work?
    e. How do you feel about the job role/organisation

6. What skills/competencies do you think you have developed/improved on?
    a. Have you gained confidence/self efficacy
    b. Do you feel in control of their work load?

7. As you know my study is about psychological ownership. What does ownership in the workplace mean to you?
    a. Do you see examples of colleagues who seem to demonstrate ownership?
        i. Do you have examples of times that you have demonstrated ownership?

8. Have you experienced feelings of ownership previously - perhaps in a part time job at uni or via your hobbies?
    a. Can you provide any examples of ownership

9. Have you considered work options post-graduation?
    a. Do you see yourself in a similar job role?
    b. Would you work for this organisation again?

Appendix Four: WPS Interview Questions

Interview Schedule – Work Placement Students

1. Tell me about your placement search and the process that took you to your placement at _____ company.

   Aim: To ascertain how participants felt about the role/organisation before they started work e.g. was this one of their top choices re role/org or did they compromise.

2. Can you tell me about your first week on your work placement? Possible follow up questions:
   a) Was there a structured induction process in place? How thorough was the handover?
   b) What were their initial thoughts regarding job role/organisation?
   c) Who were the key people that they initially met and what were their views of the organisation?
   d) Did you hear any organisational stories which reflected the culture of the organisation?

   Aim: To understand more about the transition into work and the crucial initial entry period. How the organisation helps new starters settle into the organisation.

3. Tell me a little bit more about your job role and the organisation now? Can you provide examples of
   a) Any elements of the job role/organisation that you have particularly enjoyed or struggled with?
   b) How has the job role changed over time?
   c) Have you adapted the job role/Improved processes etc?
   d) How much control do you have regarding the tasks you complete or your work load in general?
   e) How would you describe the organisation?
   f) What are your feeling towards the job role/organisation?
   g) What are your colleague's feelings towards their work and the organisation?

   Aim: As per routes to PO – examples of investing self, intimate knowledge of job role/org, control over job role and motives of PO – examples of self efficacy, sense of belonging and self-identity. Examples of other individuals PO

4. Can you provide any examples of skills/competencies that you have developed/improved on during your time on placement?
   a) To what extent has your self-confidence improved in this job role? If yes in what way/if no, why might this be so?

   Aim: To ascertain levels of self efficacy

5. What opportunities have you had to work with senior managers or key decision makers?
   a) What are the attitudes of senior management to placement students?

b) Do you know how these individuals feel about the organisation?

Aim: To assess opportunities to invest self in company/sense of belonging via exposure to senior people and also to role modelling ("possible selves").

6. What contribution do you believe you have made to the organisation on your work placement?
    a. Do you feel valued – if so, by whom?
    b. Does the environment around you encourage excellence?
    c. Does the organisation have any mechanisms to show they value contributions? e.g. employee of the month

    Aim: Assess organisational opportunities and its impact on PO development

7. If you could change one thing about your placement what would that be?

    Aim: Link to PO motives and routes, impact of org decisions on those at the start of their career

8. As you know my study is about psychological ownership. What does ownership in the workplace mean to you?
    a) Do you have any examples of colleagues who seem to demonstrate ownership in the workplace?
    b) Do you have examples of times that you have demonstrated ownership in the workplace?

    Aim: To assess other possible motives/routes to PO

9. At what point in your placement do you believe you developed feelings of ownership? (relevant to those students who believe they show feelings of ownership)
    a. Was this the result of seeing others demonstrate ownership?

    Aim: To assess time period when developing PO (links back to questions 3,4,7)

10. Are there any negative implications associated with feeling ownership in the workplace (either for you, colleagues or the organisation)?

11. Can you provide any examples of individuals who are very territorial of their work, their ideas or their space around them?

    Aim: Posited that there are negative implications of PO such as workplace stress, territoriality

12. Have you experienced feelings of ownership previously - perhaps at uni, in your hobbies or a part time job?

    Aim: to assess if there are building blocks outside of the workplace for the development of PO

13. What sort of roles are you hoping to apply for after graduating?
    a) What type of organisation do you see yourself working for?
    b) Has this organisation provided you with information regarding their graduate roles?

    Aim: Consider future plans to compare to their feelings of ownership (are they transferable, what are the conditions to become further linked with the organisation).

Appendix Five: Employer Interview Questions

Employer Interview Questions

1. Could you start by telling me a little bit about the recruitment process that you use to hire placement students?
    a. What skills and competencies do you look for in a student?
    b. What are the key factors that you look for?
    c. Do you ask students to undertake any tests?
    d. Do you complete your own recruitment, is there are separate team, do you outsource some of the process?

    Aim: Scene setting, but also to understand the opportunities for students to invest in the company during the recruitment process and start to gain a sense of belonging and see examples of "possible selves"

2. Could you tell me a little bit about the sort of work students undertake for you whilst on placement?
    a. For how many years have you been employing placement students

    Aim: Ice breaker question to start the conversation, understand a bit more about the students work and provide level of experience in managing students. May also help us understand if these jobs fit the notion of complex roles.

3. Going from education into the workplace can be a big transition for individuals and I wondered what sort of processes are in place to help students make that transition during their first few weeks.
    a. What is the organisation role?
    b. What is the departmental role?
    c. What is the line manager role?
    d. Role of the previous incumbent if a student?

    Aim: To understand more about the transition into work and the crucial initial entry period. How the organisation helps new starters settle into the organisation and creating that sense of belonging. Examples of changing identity & developing "possible selves"

4. Do you have any examples of student's proactive behaviour prior to starting their work placement or in the first few weeks?
    e) Do some students try and meet their team before they start their placement or email the team regarding how to prepare?
    f) Do students immediately offer to be involved in any extra activities such as helping with student recruitment?
    g) Do you think that if students actively try to facilitate a strong transition that this has positive outcomes further into the placement?

Aim: To understand if it is possible to show early signs of ownership via any of the established PO routes occurs examples of investing self, intimate knowledge of job role/org, control over job role and motives of PO – examples of self efficacy, sense of belonging and self-identity.

5. Going back to the job role, on average how long does it take for students to feel comfortable in their role and what factors do you think contribute to these feelings?
    - Which part of the job role do students become familiar with most quickly?
    - How do you support student development?

Aim: To understand if it is possible to show early signs of ownership, but also how that sense of ownership may develop. Is it via some of the established PO routes such as of investing self, intimate knowledge of job role/org, control over job role and motives of PO – examples of self efficacy, sense of belonging and self-identity.

6. What sort of contribution have students made to the dept /organisation whilst on placement?
    a. Have the students adapted/improved processes
    b. Have the students introduced new ideas to the team such as new technology

    Aim: to demonstrate if students are able to add value to a business

7. What do the students who perform well on their placement do differently from those students who perform less well?
    a. At what point are the students considered to be a high performer?
    b. How easy is it to maintain these accolades throughout a placement?
    c. Do the students who perform well have lots of control over their workloads?
    d. Is performance related to confidence in your experience?
    e. Is it a matter of "fit" to the job role or organisation?
    f. In your opinion what impact can you as a line manager have on the student's performance?

Aim: To ascertain if there are links between any of the roots to PO are mentioned e.g. investing self, intimate knowledge of job role/org, control over job role and motives of PO – examples of self efficacy, sense of belonging and self-identity as well as other elements that may impact on the students

8. What does the organisation or the department do to make staff feel valued – are students included in this?
    a. What are the attitudes of senior managers towards placement students?
    b. Does the student take part in the normal company appraisal or do they have a separate review?
    c. How regularly do you have one to ones with students?

Aim: Assess organisational opportunities and its impact on PO development

9. As you know my study is about psychological ownership. How would you describe ownership in the workplace please?
   Aim: To ascertain an individual's personal view of what they believe ownership to be and compare to the current literature

10. Do you have any examples of students demonstrating ownership in the workplace?
    c) Do they feel ownership for their job role?
    d) Do they feel ownership for their team?
    e) Do they feel ownership for the organisation?
    f) Any other types of ownership such as ownership of their career?
    g) What are the main characteristics that these students have?

    Aim: To assess the type of ownership they may have observed in students including career ownership which has been mentioned by students

11. At what point might these feelings of ownership arise?
    a. Do feelings of ownership for their job role, org and team appear at the same time or at different times?
    b. Do you think it is easier to feel ownership for some targets more than others?

Aim: To ascertain time periods of PO development

12. Do you think the organisation encourages ownership and if so, do you have any examples of this? How might this message be communicated to staff?
    Aim: Assessing if they feel that ownership is something that can be learnt and developed

13. What are the benefits to the organisation when students demonstrate ownership in their role?
    a. What are the benefits to the team?
    b. What are the benefits to you as a line manager?
    c. What are the benefits to the student?

    Aim: Trying to assess who benefits most from ownership or is it mutually beneficial. To see if any of the current considered positives are mentioned such as organisational citizenship behaviour, organisational commitment, job satisfaction

14. Are there any negative to students demonstrating workplace ownership?
    a. To the student
    b. To their line manager
    c. To the team
    d. To the organisation

Aim: Trying to assess what negative impact PO may have and how it affects others and/or the organisation. Confirm if any of the posited negatives such as stress, territoriality are mentioned.

15. Is ownership in students constant or can it be more fluid and will come and go

Aim: Referring back to our relationship with possessions which some have suggested can wax and wane.

Appendix Six: Placement Development Advisor Interview Questions

PDA Interview Questions

16. Would you mind giving me a brief overview of the role of a Placement Development Advisor please?
    Aim: Ice breaker question to start the conversation and provide clarity regarding the PDA role

17. How long have you been working in this role please?
    Aim: Ascertain years of experience

18. Going from education into the workplace can be a big transition for individuals and I wondered what sort of processes do organisations have in place to help students make that transition – such as an induction process?
    a. Do you think there are any benefits to a strong induction process?
    b. Do you have any examples of good practice?
    c. Do you have any examples of poor practice?
    d. Is there anything more that organisations could do to facilitate a successful transition?

    Aim: To understand more about the transition into work and the crucial initial entry period. How the organisation helps new starters settle into the organisation and creating that sense of belonging. Examples of changing identity & developing "possible selves"

19. Have you seen any examples whereby students have been proactive in preparing for their placement and the transition into the workplace if so, do you have any examples please?
    h) Do some students try and meet their team before they start their placement or email the team regarding how to prepare?
    i) Do students immediately offer to be involved in any extra activities such as helping with student recruitment?
    j) Do you think that if students actively try to facilitate a strong transition that this has positive outcomes further into the placement?

    Aim: To understand if it is possible to show early signs of ownership via any of the established PO routes occurs examples of investing self, intimate knowledge of job role/org, control over job role and motives of PO – examples of self efficacy, sense of belonging and self-identity.

20. What do the students who perform well on placement do differently from those students who perform less well?
    a. Do you find lots of high performers in one organisation – why might this be so?
    b. At what point are the students considered to be a high performer?
    c. How easy is it to maintain these accolades throughout a placement?
    d. Do the students who perform well have lots of control over their workloads?
    e. Is it a matter of "fit" to the job role or organisation?
    f. What impact does confidence regarding their job role have on their performance in your opinion?
    g. In your opinion what impact does their line manager have on the student's performance?

Aim: To ascertain if there are links between any of the roots to PO are mentioned e.g. investing self, intimate knowledge of job role/org, control over job role and motives of PO – examples of self efficacy, sense of belonging and self-identity as well as other elements that may impact on the students

21. As you know my study is about psychological ownership. How would you describe ownership in the workplace please?
    Aim: To ascertain an individual's personal view of what they believe ownership to be

22. Do you have any examples of students demonstrating ownership in the workplace?
    h) Do they feel ownership for their job role?
    i) Do they feel ownership for their team?
    j) Do they feel ownership for the organisation?
    k) Any other types of ownership?
    l) What are the main characteristics that these students have?

    Aim: To assess the type of ownership they may have observed in students

23. At what point in their placement do these feelings of ownership arise?
    a. Do feelings of ownership for their job role, org and team appear at the same time or at different times?
    b. Do you think it is easier to feel ownership for some targets more than others?

Aim: To ascertain time periods of PO development

24. What characteristics/factors do you believe help the development of ownership feelings in these students?
    a. From student perspective
    b. From managers perspective
    c. From Organisational perspective

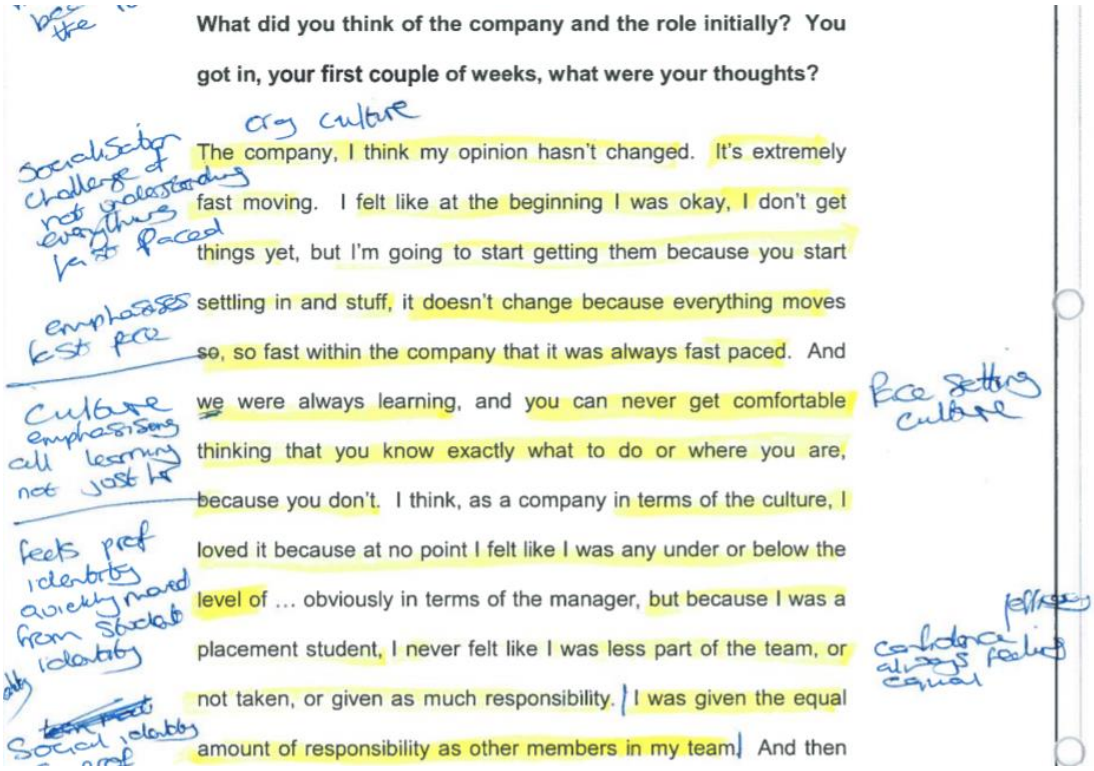
Aim: Again to see if any of the posited routes and motives are mentioned – examples of investing self, intimate knowledge of job role/org, control over job role and motives of PO – examples of self efficacy, sense of belonging and self-identity.

25. In your opinion can you think of any positive and negative implications for students who develop feelings of ownership in the workplace for students?
    a. What about positive or negative implications for the organisation?

Aim: To ascertain from their experience the positives/negatives attached to feelings of ownership e.g. purpose/workplace stress or territoriality

Appendix Seven: Data Analysis Phase One (Data familiarisation)

Extract One

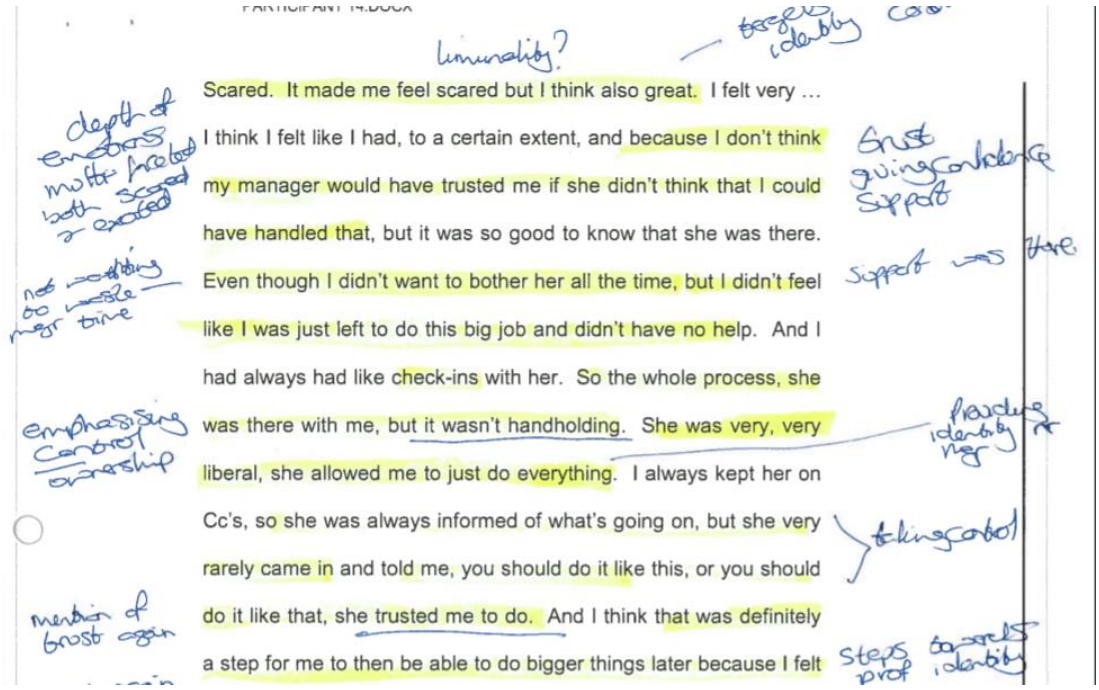


What did you think of the company and the role initially? You got in, your first couple of weeks, what were your thoughts?

org culture

The company, I think my opinion hasn't changed. It's extremely fast moving. I felt like at the beginning I was okay, I don't get things yet, but I'm going to start getting them because you start settling in and stuff, it doesn't change because everything moves so, so fast within the company that it was always fast paced. And we were always learning, and you can never get comfortable thinking that you know exactly what to do or where you are, because you don't. I think, as a company in terms of the culture, I loved it because at no point I felt like I was any under or below the level of … obviously in terms of the manager, but because I was a placement student, I never felt like I was less part of the team, or not taken, or given as much responsibility. I was given the equal amount of responsibility as other members in my team. And then

Extract Two



liminality?

Scared. It made me feel scared but I think also great. I felt very … I think I felt like I had, to a certain extent, and because I don't think my manager would have trusted me if she didn't think that I could have handled that, but it was so good to know that she was there. Even though I didn't want to bother her all the time, but I didn't feel like I was just left to do this big job and didn't have no help. And I had always had like check-ins with her. So the whole process, she was there with me, but it wasn't handholding. She was very, very liberal, she allowed me to just do everything. I always kept her on Cc's, so she was always informed of what's going on, but she very rarely came in and told me, you should do it like this, or you should do it like that, she trusted me to do. And I think that was definitely a step for me to then be able to do bigger things later because I felt

Extract Three

Yeah, that makes sense, thank you. Do you know at what point in your placement you think you started having feelings of ownership?

relationship of ownership

being given ownership by someone else

Fairly early, but I think that was due to my manager actually. Full on giving me that ownership. Personally, I like to think that even if I wouldn't have a manager that full on gave me things on a silver platter, I would have eventually asked for some ownership because I am … I like to be able to do things myself. So my regular day-to-day job; carry it however way I needed to, however there's always areas like, maybe we can look into this and then if the answer is yes, then can I then look into doing it myself, and exploring other areas. But even I feel like at the end of it I wasn't given the

autonomy control investing self

Appendix Eight: Data Analysis Phase Two (Generating Codes including Phase Two Codes)

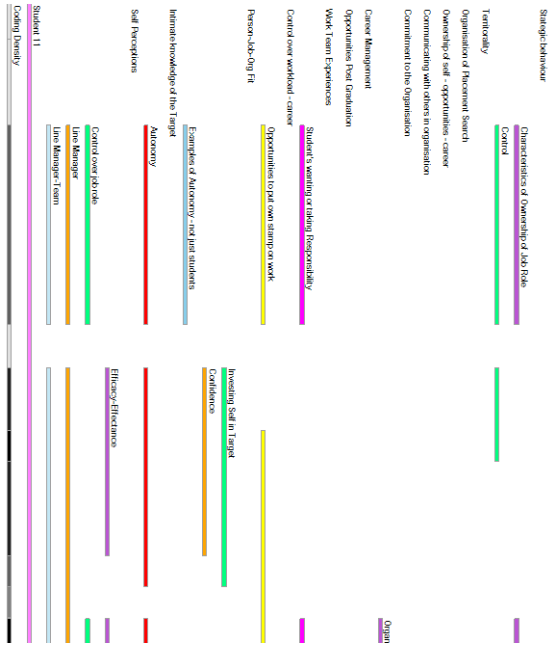
DJs, and then the winner would actually go to Amsterdam to the biggest house event. That music.

Nice prize.

Yeah, so I helped … it was during the summertime, so the member of the team that covers this area had left to go on holiday and my manager literally just said, you seem to know what you're doing, just run this. Obviously, she was always … she was sat next to me, so she was always there to help me, but she gave me full control over that campaign and that took most of my first three months. And I ran it and it was great. One of the best things I did.

How did it make you feel, being given that control?

Scared. It made me feel scared but I think also great. I felt very … I think I felt like I had, to a certain extent, and because I don't think my manager would have trusted me if she didn't think that I could have handled that, but it was so good to know that she was there. Even though I didn't want to bother her all the time, but I didn't feel like I was just left to do this big job and didn't have no help. And I had always had like check-ins with her. So the whole process, she was there with me, but it wasn't handholding. She was very, very liberal, she allowed me to just do everything. I always kept her on Cc's, so she was always informed of what's going on, but she very rarely came in and told me, you should do it like this, or you should do it like that, she trusted me to do. And I think that was definitely a



Phase Two Codes

Factors which influenced Placement Search Choice	Feeling of being part of a group
Ideal Placements - Sectors WPSs were really interested in	Terminology - we
Organisation of Placement Search	Identifying with Org
Job Roles of Interest	Contract Staff
Recruitment Process - Interview Stage	Contamination
Time Period found Placement	Rituals
Induction at Organisation	Disinvestment-Decoupling
Organisation methods of socialisation	Contribution
Learning the Ropes-Sensemaking	High Quality Work
Thrown in the deep end	Feeling Valued
Feeling Scared-Nervous	Feeling of Happiness
General Overview of Job Role	Sense of Purpose
Job Role Variety	Control over workload - career
Volunteering	Ownership of self - opportunities - career
Mismatch between WPS expectations and role-org	Creating Something
Teamwork	Creativity on Placement
Work Team Experiences	Investing themselves into job role
Frustrations with individuals-teams	Opportunities to put own stamp on work
Communicating with others in organisation	Ethnicity
Challenging Environment	Feeling territorial about someone-something
Frustration at Org	Feeling of disappointing people
Working Environment	Feeling Worried

Organisation Culture	Feelings of Regret
Remote Working	Feelings of stress
Participant's Peer Group	Feeling Overwhelmed
Competition between participants	Internal Pressure
Links to Previous WPSs or Cohorts	Feeling Trusted
Future Goals	Trust in other people
Thinking ahead to future work	Giving Ownership
Work Shadowing	Impact of Travel on Placement
Placement influence on career aspirations	Job Role Changes due to Organisational Changes
Commitment to the Organisation	Job Roles Changes
Liquidity	Organisational Change
Appraisal's - formal or informational	Job-Org-Individual Fit
Work Metrics - targets to achieve	Justifying Outcomes
Understanding organisation's expectations	Line Manager
Access to senior managers	Wanting-expecting Praise
Influences on WPSs	Loyalty to someone or something
Being Inspired	Persuasive behaviour
Mentors or similar staff members	Poor Practice
Additional Learning Needs	Power in an ownership context
Additional Responsibility	Previous WPS Experience
WPSs wanting or taking Responsibility	Pushing back on People
Owning Mistakes	Putting name to something
Characteristics of Ownership of Job Role	Recognition by others
Ambassador for Organisation	Pride in Work
Ambition	Self Doubt
Independence	Self Perceptions

Motivation	Shared Ownership
Area's WPSs would change	Skill Development whilst on Placement
Accountability	Stakeholder Management
Asking for help	Strategic behaviour
Management Control	Relationship Building
Feeling invested in	Networking Opportunities
Feeling listened too	WPS Beliefs
Work Life Balance	WPS Identity
Completing whole tasks	Hardworking
Control over job role	WPS Loneliness
Examples of Autonomy - not just WPSs	Taking on too much work
Examples of being Proactive	Struggling with workload
Freedom relating to job role	Time Management
Wanting too much control	Time period WPS felt ownership
Organisational Control	
WPSs taking Leadership	
WPS as Manger	
Confidence	
WPSs liking-disliking a challenge	
Out of Comfort Zone	
Connection to Org	

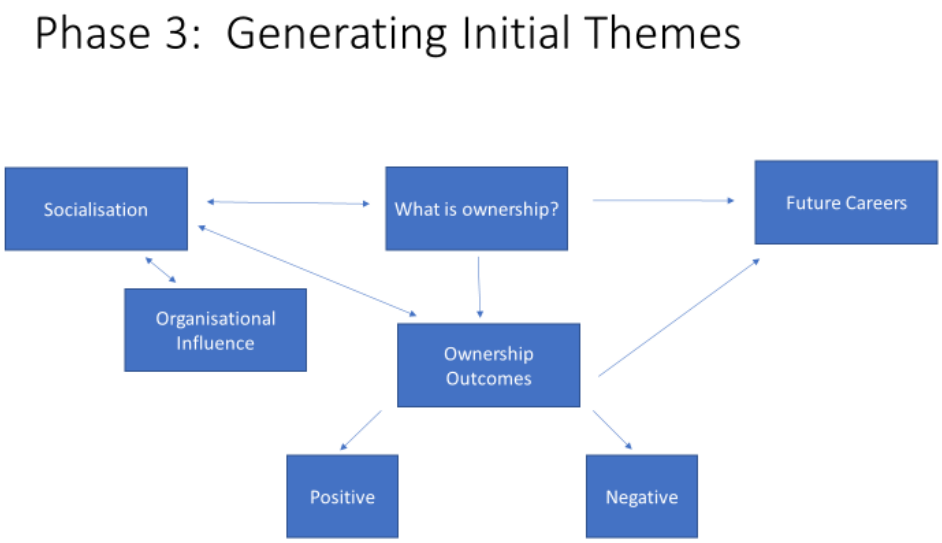
Appendix Nine: Data Analysis Phase Two Continued (Data Coding Reduction)

Name	Reason for merging codes/Relevance	New Name
Factors which influenced Placement Search Choice	Similarity to other codes regarding to placement search	Placement Search
Ideal Placements - Sectors WPSs were really interested in		
Organisation of Placement Search		
Job Roles of Interest		
Recruitment Process - Interview Stage		
Time Period found Placement		
Induction at Organisation	Overlap of categories/all relate to the initial socialisation period	Socialisation Period
Organisation methods of socialisation		
Learning the Ropes-Sensemaking		
Thrown in the deep end		
Feeling Scared-Nervous		
General Overview of Job Role	Overlap of categories	Job Role Content
Job Role Variety		
Volunteering		
Mismatch between WPS expectations and role-org		??
Teamwork	Overlap of categories	Team Dynamics
Work Team Experiences		
Frustrations with individuals-teams		
Communicating with others in organisation	Overlap of categories	Organisational Culture

Name	Reason for merging codes/Relevance	New Name
Challenging Environment		
Frustration at Org		
Working Environment		
Organisation Culture		
Remote Working		
Participant's Peer Group	Overlap of categories	Participant's Peer Group
Competition between participants		
Links to Previous WPSs or Cohorts		
Future Goals	Categories all relate to future plans/goals	Future Plans/Goals
Thinking ahead to future work		
Work Shadowing		
Placement influence on career aspirations		
Commitment to the Organisation		
Liquidity		
Appraisal's - formal or informational	Overlap with both areas relating to organisational measurement of staff	Organisational Measurement of Staff
Work Metrics - targets to achieve		
Understanding organisation's expectations		
Access to senior managers	Overlap of categories	Role Models/Mentors/Influences
Influences on WPSs		
Being Inspired		
Mentors or similar staff members		
Additional Learning Needs	Not Relevant to this study	
Additional Responsibility	Overlap of categories	Responsibility
WPSs wanting or taking Responsibility		

Name	Reason for merging codes/Relevance	New Name
Owning Mistakes		
Characteristics of Ownership of Job Role		
Ambassador for Organisation		Social Identity
Ambition		WPS Traits
Independence		
Motivation		
Area's WPSs would change	Overlapping with other categories – move to more relevant categories & withdraw code	
Accountability		Accountability
Asking for help	Links to one construct	Psychological Safety
Management Control		
Feeling invested in		
Feeling listened too		
Work Life Balance		
Completing whole tasks	Overlap of categories	Taking Control

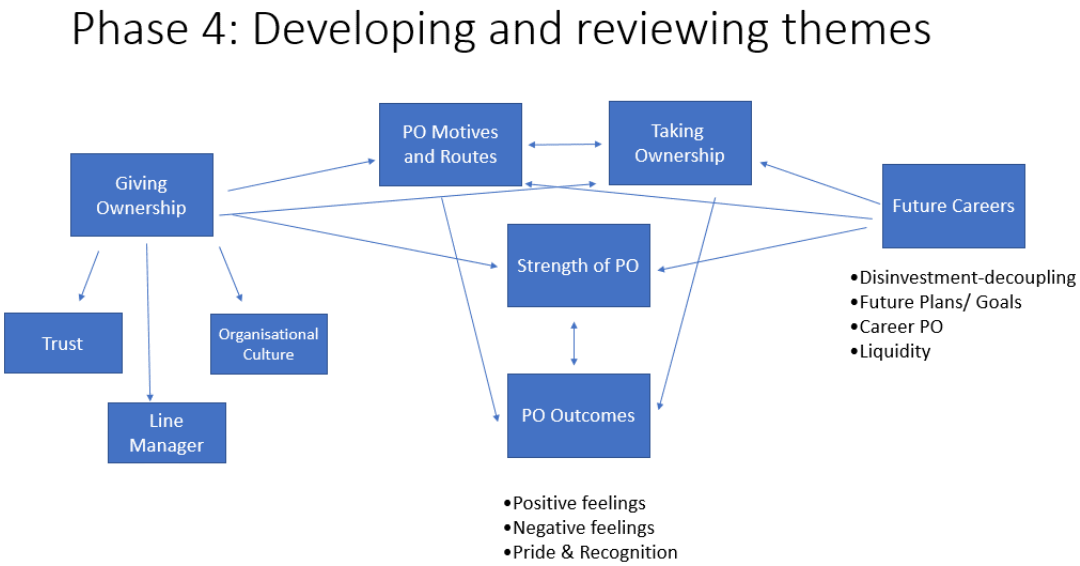
Appendix Ten: Data Analysis Phase Three (Generating Initial Themes)

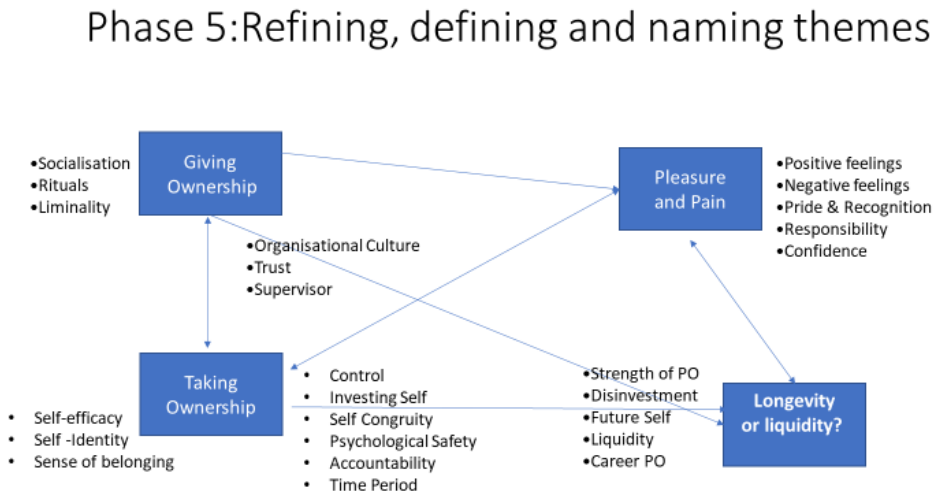


Phase 3: Generating Initial Themes (Codes)

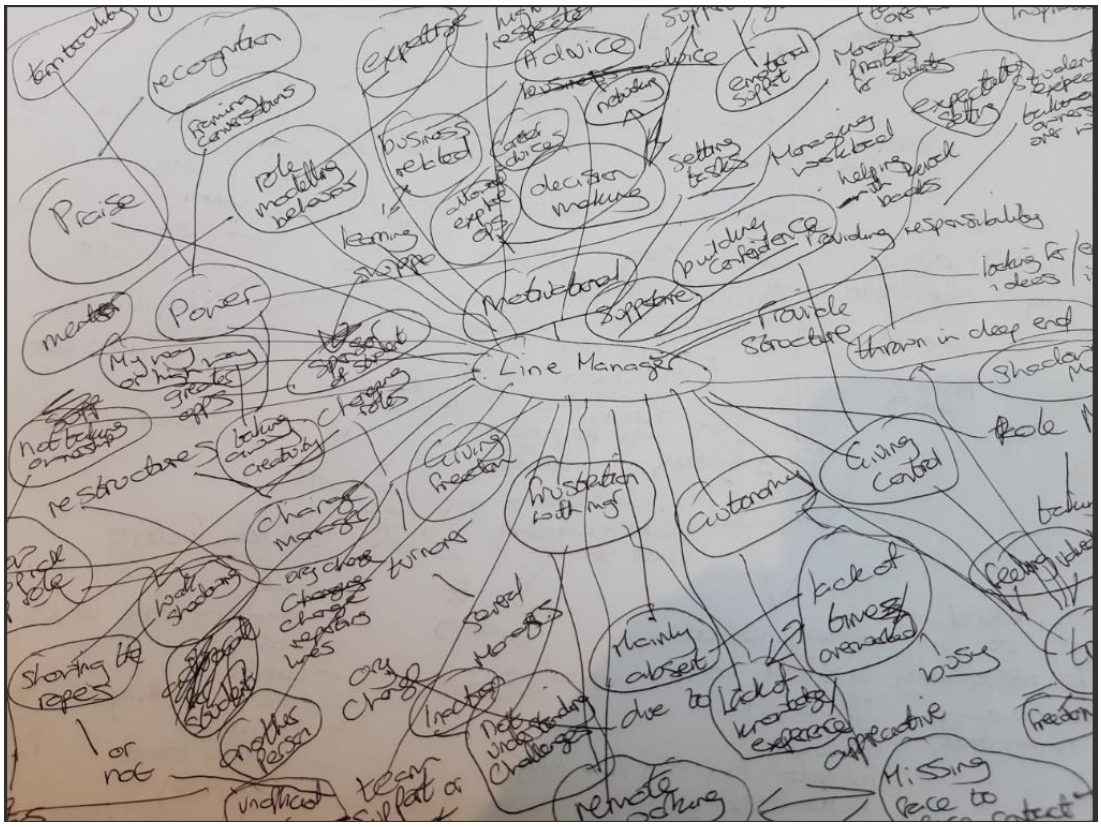
Socialisation	Organisational Influence	What is Ownership	Ownership Outcomes	Future Careers
• Socialisation Period • Participant Peer Group • Social Identity • Psychological Safety • Sense of Belonging • Rituals • WPS Expectations • Previous Work experience • Time period WPS felt Ownership	• Team Dynamics • Organisational Culture • Role Models/Influences • Accountability • Psychological Safety • Sense of Belonging • Rituals • Trust • Change • Line Manager • Power • Shared Ownership • Relationship Building • Work Load	• Job Role Content Responsibility WPS Traits • Taking Control • Self Efficacy • Psychological Safety • Sense of Belonging • Investing self-Self Identity-Mastery • Trust • Self Congruity • Managing Upwards • Self Perceptions • Skill Development • Relationship Building • Self Identity	• WPS Leadership Role • Positive Feelings • Negative Feelings • Territorality • Pride & Recognition • Skill Development	• Disinvestment-decoupling • Future Plans/ Goals • Career PO • Liquidity

Appendix Eleven: Data Analysis Phase Four and Five (Reviewing and Defining Themes)





Appendix Twelve: A Mind Map of the Messy Reality



Appendix Thirteen: Extracts from Reflective Journal

Student One 3 May 2019

Interview today at 14.00. Frustratingly I have a bit of a headache. Just hoping it won't turn into a migraine. Looking forward to finally starting interviews. This is a student that I know a little. He came in and did a talk to other students whilst on placement, so we had some correspondence and a chat. I don't really know him from being part of the cohort however. Office is nice and quiet so I feel that I have been able to prep well. I've gone through my notes on interviews which has some reminders of what to do before, during and after.

The first interview went well. I think I set the scene and he felt relaxed. He talked a lot which was good, so I didn't always have to ask too many questions. I didn't have a watch with me and so wasn't sure of timing and my phone went dark. Think about a way of managing this. I think I probably could have probed a bit more on a couple of occasions, but generally the flow was good. I closed well, but annoyingly when I turned off the recorder, he started to talk about his volunteering role and gave loads of examples about identity & place of home – how annoying!!

PDA Interviews 1, 2 and 3 24 June.

These are different types of participants and I am using different questions and so have that initial anxiety about starting again. I am completing all three interviews on the one day almost back to back and am quite excited about what they will have to say. I used to work with one of the participants, but do not know the others particularly well, so I am sure there will be a different dynamic. As they work with students on placement, they are on the outside looking in to organisations. They do however see all of our students whilst they are on placement almost in a mentor type role. This means they will have seen a good spread of students across the years.

They were all such different personalities, but even though they expressed themselves in different ways, they said such similar things which is really interesting.

Employer Two

I was delighted that this person agreed to be interviewed as she is based at a global organisation and has been line managing placement students for many years. This organisation also state that ownership is one of their core values, so really excited when they said yes! She is Alumni of the university but graduated before I joined and so I have only met her when she has come in for the occasional guest lecture and I don't think we had been in contact for around 3 years. I wasn't sure how open she would be with me. I wasn't nervous at all – more intrigued. It was a fascinating interview as this is an organisation who has ownership embedded. Such a different set up in the employer compared to the first employer interview. Good to have that contrast, however.

End of Appendices