THE FEELINGS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP AMONGST BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS: AN ETHNOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to uncover in which ways psychological ownership manifests itself in blue-collar work and how psychological ownership is perceived amongst blue-collar workers. A blue-collar occupation is considered to be low complexity work. Job crafting was used as a lens to take a new look upon the concept of psychological ownership. The method used for this study was the ethnography, which consisted of observations combined with interviews of five mechanics in the field of utilities (gas and electrics) in the Netherlands. Contrary to previous findings in literature the study shows that it is possible to gain feelings of psychological ownership in a low complex job such as a blue-collar occupation. Job crafting behaviors and psychological ownership behaviors show to be intertwined concepts: both behaviors seem to take place at the same time. The study provides the field with a new understanding of psychological ownership being situational and relational instead of feelings of ownership being a constant state of mind. For future research, it is recommended to do more inquiry into the connection between psychological ownership and job crafting behaviors to better understand how these two concepts are related.

Keywords: psychological ownership - blue-collar occupation - job complexity - job crafting - ethnography

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1   INTRODUCTION

"We drive into the parking lot and while I am still sitting in the passenger's seat, I look at the other vehicles on the terrain. There is one van that particularly catches my eye. The entire dashboard of this van is filled with puppets of the character Bert, from the television show Sesame Street. I smile and when I ask the mechanic with whom I am going along for the day, he explains to me that the owner of the van is called Bert. I discover that almost everyone has some sort of way to recognize their own van amongst the others. This is Bert's way of showing that the vehicle is his."

This fragment of a field note taken for this study, shows a clear example of psychological ownership. Psychological ownership is one of the most promising psychological concepts, especially in the phenomenon of people at work because of its distinctiveness of other psychological concepts (Dawkins, Tian, Newman, & Martin, 2015). To gain a deeper insight into psychological ownership and specifically feelings of psychological ownership amongst blue-collar workers, this thesis describes an ethnographic research that has been conducted amongst mechanics in the field of utilities (gas and electrics).

1.1.   Feelings of ownership towards an organization or job

Psychological ownership is defined as "the state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership or a piece of that target is 'theirs'" (J.L. Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001, p. 302). Other than in theories of possession, the target of ownership in psychological ownership, does not necessarily refer to physical objects. Employees for example, can have feelings of ownership toward the organization they work for, or their job (Peng & Pierce, 2015). Although the mechanic called Bert has feelings of ownership towards his van, these feelings of ownership may stretch further: he might feel as though he owns his job or even the organization he works for.

1.2.   Quantitative focus of previous studies into psychological ownership

Most of the research on psychological ownership has a quantitative focus and scholars are encouraged to conduct empirical research to test the concept and measurement of psychological ownership (Avey, Avolio, Crossley, & Luthans, 2009; Peng & Pierce, 2015; J.L. Pierce, Jussila, & Cummings, 2009; J.L. Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). A part of these studies focus on antecedents of psychological ownership, such as employee participation in decision making (Chi & Han, 2008; Han, Chiang, & Chang, 2010; Liu, Wang, Hui, & Lee, 2012) and work environment structure (O'Driscoll, Pierce, & Coghlan, 2006; Peng & Pierce, 2015; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004) on organization-based psychological ownership. For job-based psychological ownership job complexity has been found to be one of the antecedents of psychological ownership (Peng & Pierce, 2015). Moreover, the outcomes of psychological ownership of the organization were studied, with a focus on research on the individual-level, such as organizational commitment (Han et al., 2010; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Vandewalle, Van Dyne, & Kostova, 1995) and employee helping behaviors (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). Dawkins et al. (2015) show in their review that there has been limited research into the outcomes of job-based psychological ownership, of which some studies are even contradicting each other. These quantitative studies set a focused outline for the concept of psychological ownership.

1.3. The value of qualitative research in the field of psychological ownership

However, as McConville, Arnold, and Smith (2016) concluded as well, little to no research in the field of psychological ownership has been of a qualitative nature. And although the quantitative studies have been a useful starting point for the field of psychological ownership, qualitative studies can help to gain a deeper insight into psychological ownership and the process of gaining ownership, for which Brown, Pierce and Crossley (2014) plead. Furthermore, for future research, Dawkins et al. (2015) propose a mixed-method study including a qualitative component regarding the measurement of psychological ownership. They suggest theoretical directions as well as methodological directions for future research on psychological ownership. By exploring the ways to achieve feelings of psychological ownership in a qualitative manner, the understanding of how feelings of ownership come to existence will increase. Questions like "how does control manifests itself" and "why does a person invest oneself into ones job?" are more properly answered through qualitative research. Moreover, the concept of psychological ownership can be looked upon at an individual level (instead of deducing individual opinions through a survey) by using a qualitative method. These are relevant issues to look into for organizations, since feelings of psychological ownership towards an organization or job have shown to have a positive impact (Peng & Pierce, 2015) and it is thus of importance to get a better understanding of how these feelings grow and develop.

1.4. Job complexity and psychological ownership

One particular and recent – again quantitative - study tried to gain a deeper understanding of how psychological ownership feelings develop. In their three-part study, Brown, Pierce, and Crossley (2014) tested measurements for the three routes which give rise to feelings of ownership. In their original article, J.L. Pierce et al. (2001) described that feelings of psychological ownership will occur through three routes: controlling the target, coming to intimately know the target and investing the self into the target. Additionally, the study of Brown et al. (2014) pointed out that there is a significant and positive relationship between job complexity and job-based psychological ownership. The authors explained that high complexity jobs lead to higher levels of control, that these jobs will increase the opportunity to come to know the job more thorough and complete and that these jobs will increase the opportunity for an employee to invest his or herself into the job. Thus, a complex job provides a person with access to all the pathways to gain feelings of ownership. Contrary to that, employees in a low complex job will not gain feelings of ownership because they lack the opportunity to 'travel' on one or more of the routes. A blue-collar occupation falls within the scope of a low complexity job (Hunter, Schmidt, & Judiesch, 1990). By arraying a blue-collar occupation such as a mechanic as a low complex job, this study takes a look at the other side. Do feelings of psychological ownership really not manifest themselves in blue-collar work? These types of occupations have surprised the academic field before with their unexpected positive outlook on their own occupations (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) and their ability to take on a proactive role in the form of job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). This concept of job crafting, will be used as a lens to look upon the manifestation of psychological ownership in blue-collar work. The theoretical framework will be used to take a more into depth view on this subject. To gain more knowledge on psychological ownership and blue-collar workers, the following question was drafted and answered during the course of the research:

In which ways does psychological ownership manifest itself in blue-collar work and how is psychological ownership perceived by people in a blue-collar occupation?

By answering this question, this study nuances the concept of psychological ownership. A nuance that is much needed in the predominantly quantitative look towards this psychological concept. Furthermore, the study contributes to the field of critical theory, by emancipating the profession of blue-collar workers.

The next chapters of this thesis will further discuss the study. First by explaining the main theoretical concepts, secondly by clarifying the ethnographic method that has been used and decisions that have been made in the process of the inquiry. Furthermore, the results section will go into the main findings of the study. Lastly, the conclusion of this study and implications for future research and practice will be discussed in the discussions section.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is founded upon several theoretical concepts. It can be theorized that these concepts will have some sort of overlap or connection to the other. This chapter will explain the concepts involved in this study more in detail, in order to clarify their place in, and the focus of, the ethnographic study.

2.1 Psychological ownership, the needs and routes

Psychological ownership has its roots in theories of possession. It refers to a subconscious psychological concept and answers the question: "What do I feel is mine?" (J.L. Pierce et al., 2001). The concept answers to the following three needs: (1) efficacy and effectance, (2) "having a place" and (3) self-identity. Psychological ownership is acquired through three routes, which connect to the three needs: (1) controlling the target, (2) coming to intimately know the target and (3) investing the self into the target.

Feelings of psychological ownership can manifest themselves in several 'targets'. These targets do not have to be tangible objects. In literature, there has been made a distinction between organizational-based psychological ownership and job-based psychological ownership (Dawkins et al., 2015).

In order to fulfill the **need of efficacy and effectance**, a state in which a person desires to be efficacious in relation to his or her environment, a person exercises **control**. Thus, one of the ways for a person to feel as though a target belongs to him or herself, is by exercising control over the target (J.L. Pierce et al., 2001). In the fragment about the van of the mechanic called Bert, control was taken over the van by decorating it. The need for **"having a place"** explains that when people inhabit something, it no longer is an object, but becomes part of themselves (Dreyfuss, 1991: 45 J.L. Pierce et al., 2001). When a target is part of themselves, a person might **invests him** or **herself** even more into the target. The mechanic called Bert altered his van (thus investing something of himself) by putting in the toys of Bert. The need for **self-identity** is attained through gaining a deep **knowledge** of the target and **the investment of self** as well. When a person knows something (an object such as a van, or their job or organization they work for) intimately, it will become part of the self. When the target becomes part of the self, this helps a person to express his or her identity to others and to maintain a consistent identity (J.L. Pierce et al., 2003). Furthermore, a person will invest him or herself more into a target that is considered to be a part of the self. Thus, in the case of the mechanic and the van, the mechanic knows about the customs of the mechanics making alterations to their vans, leading him to fill his one with toys of Bert.

In an online survey amongst employees in a variety of organizations, newly established measurements for the routes towards feelings of psychological ownership were empirically tested (Brown et al., 2014). An existing instrument was used for the route of control, whereas for the two other routes, the authors developed two new measurements. The variables for the three routes were tested as being separate and distinctive from each other. The following table shows the items that are part of the measurement for each route, as can be found in the paper by Brown et al. (2014). These measurements were developed for job-based feelings of psychological ownership.

Table 1.

Scale items for the three routes of psychological ownership

Item	Question
C1	To what extent do you have influence over the things that affect you on the job?
C2	To what extent do you have influence over the tasks or parts of tasks that you will do?
C3	To what extent do you influence job-related decisions that will affect you?
C4	To what extent do you set your own work deadlines?
C5	To what extent do you control the pace and scheduling of the work that you do?
C6	In general, to what extent do you have control over your job?
K1	I am intimately familiar with what is going on with regard to my job.
K2	I have a depth of knowledge as it relates to the job.
K3	I have a comprehensive understanding of the work that I am asked to do.
K4	I have a broad understanding of this job.
I1	I have invested a major part of "myself" into this job.
I2	I have invested many of my ideas into this job.
I3	I have invested a number of my talents into this job.
I4	I have invested a significant amount of my life into this job.
I5	In general, I have invested a lot in my job.

2.1.1. Psychological ownership and job complexity

J.L. Pierce et al. (2001) already theorized how jobs that provide greater autonomy imply higher levels of control and are more likely to give rise to feelings of ownership. The route of investing the self into the target is also connected to job complexity, by stating that these jobs allow employees to "exercise higher discretion, making it more likely that they will invest more on their own ideas, unique knowledge and personal style" (J.L. Pierce et al., 2001, p. 302). In another article, it is reasoned as well that complex jobs lead to more control, which requires an employee to invest him or herself more into the job, which leads to a more intimate knowledge of the job (J.L. Pierce et al., 2009). This reasoning was empirically tested in the two-part study by Brown et al. in 2014. In one part, they tested the measurements for the three routes leading to feelings of job-based psychological ownership. In the other part, job complexity was included as one of the work environment structures that affects the feelings of job-based ownership, mediated through the three before-mentioned (and tested) routes. According to the article, complex jobs are broad in scope an deep in depth. In the study of Brown et al. (2014), job complexity is measured through the revised form of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS), originally designed by Hackman and Oldham in 1975. This instrument is based upon the five core job dimensions. Changes to these five core job dimensions increase the breadth and depth of a job. The personal and work outcomes of a complex job, thus a job which is broad in scope and deep in depth, lead to a higher sense of psychological ownership.

2.1.2. Core job dimensions

The five core job dimensions consist of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Skill variety encompasses the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work. Task identity refers to the execution of a job from beginning to end, with a visible outcome. Task significance refers to how much impact a job has on the lives or work of other people. Autonomy is the degree to which the job grants the employee freedom, independence and discretion in for example scheduling the work activities. Feedback is separated in feedback from the job itself and feedback from agents. It encompasses the degree to which an employee knows he or she is doing his or her job well.

2.2   Job complexity and blue-collar workers

The term "blue-collar" refers to workers who perform mostly labor that is regarded as manual, while a "white-collar" employee does work that involves the mind (Ansberry, 2003; Schreurs, Van Emmerik, De Cuyper, Notelaers, & De Witte, 2010). In his book The mind at work, Rose (2005) describes in his introduction how the view upon work changes for each cultural and historical context. He explains that in the current society, blue-collar occupations are considered to be unskilled, less important and that less cognition is needed to perform the work in comparison to white-collar occupations (Rose, 2005).

The O*NET program is a database in which information is gathered about occupations in the United States. When using the items belonging to the measurement on substantive complex characteristics of occupations within the O*NET program by Hadden, Kravets, and Muntaner (2004) it becomes clear that the blue-collar occupation of a mechanic (called "Maintenance and Repair Workers, General" in the O*NET database) scores for most parts low on complexity. The characteristics of an occupation considered to be substantive complex are: 'deductive reasoning', 'updating and using relevant knowledge', 'inductive reasoning', 'complex problem solving', 'active learning', 'making decisions and solving problems', 'ability utilization', 'critical thinking', 'getting information' and 'the importance of repeating tasks'. For the occupation of mechanic, the following characteristics scored average on importance (50 on a scale of 0 – 100): complex problem solving and active learning. Only the characteristics 'making decisions and solving problems' and 'getting information' scored above average on importance with a score of 59, respectively 70 on a scale of 0 – 100. The other characteristics were not mentioned in the description of a mechanic. Furthermore, Hunter et al. (1990) and Judiesch and Schmidt (2000) refer to (routinized) blue-collar occupations as low in complexity. Other studies describe blue-collar occupations in a more implicit manner as being low in complexity (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002; Thomas, 1989).

By using the revised measure of the Job Diagnostic Survey from 1988, the studies of Brown and his colleagues (2014) do not take the changes in the work space from the past thirty years into account. Furthermore, the Job Diagnostic Survey was not specifically designed to measure job complexity and further explanation of what is meant by a job which is broad in scope and deep in depth lacks in the article of Brown et al. (2014). Even though their study showed a positive relationship between job complexity and psychological ownership, a qualitative research might unravel and refine the different concepts more, or as the authors state themselves: "Thus, a deeper understanding of antecedents and evolving processes of psychological ownership can help capture the simultaneous subtlety and complexity of the shifting nature of work and provide a lens by which to understand how these changes might affect employee engagement and outcomes" (Brown et al., 2014, p. 336). One particular change in the workspace is pro-active work behavior such as job crafting (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

2.3.   Job crafting and its connection to psychological ownership

Psychological ownership and task variance are logically connected through pro-active work behavior, since one of the routes towards feelings of psychological ownership is the investment of self. A particularly useful concept in regard to this connection is that of job crafting.

Job crafting refers to the possibility of employees to shape their job within the boundaries of its tasks and relations and as a whole, in the cognition towards the job. An employee practices job crafting because of a need for control, a need for a positive self-image, a need for human connections, or a combination of these needs (Niessen, Weseler, & Kostova, 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). These needs are very similar to the needs that are fulfilled by psychological ownership (the need for efficacy and effectance, "having a place" and self-identity).

Whereas in psychological ownership more control over a target (i.e. job) is exercised to fulfill the need for efficacy and effectance, in job crafting a desire for control is one of the basic needs for a person to start crafting their job. Thus, if a person feels as though he or she needs to be more efficacious in his or her job, he or she will exercise more control, which will demonstrate itself in crafting his or her job. By engaging in job crafting, it can be expected that feelings of psychological ownership towards the job will rise.

A person desiring a positive sense of self will engage in job crafting. For psychological ownership a persons need for self-identity is attained by both a deep knowledge of the job and investment of the self into the job. Especially the investment of the self might demonstrate itself in job crafting activities. Thus again, by engaging in job crafting, feelings of psychological ownership towards the job are expected to rise.

These theorizations both point towards an entanglement of the concepts of job crafting and psychological ownership.

Furthermore, whereas the scholars of psychological ownership believe that persons with a low complex job cannot attain feelings of ownership towards their job, the field of job crafting has a different view upon low complex jobs. Job crafting is more in line with the belief of pro-active work behavior by employees throughout the organization (from top to bottom), wherein each level has its own challenges (Berg, Wrzesniewski, & Dutton, 2010). This perspective on job complexity provides this study with an interesting contrast between psychological ownership and job crafting. The contrast of on the one hand jobs low in complexity not being able to have feelings of ownership and on the other hand a field providing us with evidence that occupations that are low in complexity are self-empowering gives the reinforce arguments that this can be studied more into detail. A particularly useful method to get more into detail, is an ethnography. The next section will discuss how the ethnographic study that has been conducted, was carried out.

3   METHOD

Ethnography is a methodology characterized by the observation and sometimes even participation in particular groupings in their natural settings. Where quantitative research methods such as surveys try to simplify certain behaviors or activities, ethnography uncovers behaviors and activities that are normally invisible or taken for granted (Hughes, Bentley, & Randall, 1993). Or as Iszatt-White (2007) stated it: [ethnography] is adopted and valued "for constructing meaning rather than a positivist instrument of abstraction" (Iszatt-White, 2007, p. 448). Organizational ethnography takes place in organizational groupings, it focuses on day-to-day practices through which it provides in-depth insights in the behavior of people in organizations (Neyland, 2007). According to Brannan, Pearson, and Worthington (2007), the current dynamics of organizations, with the nature of employment and the changing expectations of employees, can only be fully understood through the use of ethnographic techniques. A blue-collar occupation is particularly well suited for ethnographic research, since the manual labor of these jobs are visible. Furthermore, the group of blue-collar workers is not one to talk about their jobs in psychological terms. For that reason, organizational ethnography was used as methodology in this study to gain more insight into psychological ownership and the process of gaining feelings of ownership in (job crafting) work activities of blue-collar workers.

3.1   The sensibilities of ethnographic research

To conduct this study, the ten sensibilities as described by Neyland (2007) in his book on organizational ethnography were taken into account. These consist of (1) strategy, (2) questions of knowledge, (3) locations and access, (4) field relations, (5) ethnographic time, (6) observing and participating, (7) supplementing, (8) writing, (9) ethics and (10) exits.

3.1.1   Strategy
With the existing caveats in research on psychological ownership, the strategy of the ethnographic study was determined. Distinctive for the strategy was its flexibility: even though the main concepts of PO, JC and blue-collar workers were fixed, throughout the entire study the relationship between or view on these concepts were able to change in relation to the findings of the ethnography.

3.1.2   Questions of knowledge
With the second sensibility, questions of knowledge, Neyland (2007) refers to the types of approaches towards knowledge of ethnographic research: realist ethnography, narrative ethnography and reflexive ethnography. This ethnographic study takes on the realist approach towards knowledge, meaning that "the data collected can be assessed for the extent to which it accurately reflects the field-site form which it has been collected" (Neyland, 2007, p. 43). Even more so, the type of ethnography this study used had a basis of 'naturalist' ethnography, in which a natural situation or environment is observed and whatever is going on is reported. It is taken into account however, that in ethnographic research, the person conducting the research always writes from some sort of subjective position (Edles, 2002 in Iszatt-White, 2007).

3.1.3   Locations and access
For the sensibility of locations and access, the researcher used her personal network to find an organization employing blue-collar workers which was willingly to cooperate to the study. This lead to a conversation with one of the regional operators in gas and electricity in the Netherlands. This organization is responsible for the maintenance of the gas pipes and grid. One of the operating areas of the organization was the center of the Netherlands, which, due to practical reasons, was chosen as the location for the study to take place. The mechanics of both gas and electricity were observed during the ethnography. It was discussed that in the case of hazardous events taking place on the

job, the mechanic with whom the researcher was going along, would give instructions whether the researcher should stay outside of a certain area or wear certain protective clothing.

3.1.4   Field relations
Regarding the fourth sensibility, field relations, the researcher ought to find a middle between 'being the researcher' and 'being part of the organization', since the occupation of a mechanic is very much a 'men's business' and it is very specialized in terms of knowledge. The latter was less likely to take place than the former. However, the researcher did try to connect on a personal level with the participants, in order to gain more insights in the opinions and viewpoints of the participants.

3.1.5   Ethnographic time
When it comes to the sensibility of time, Neyland (2007) states that the time scale is very important in organizational ethnography. A true ethnographic study can take months, resulting into 'thick descriptions', storytelling descriptions of the events taken place. The so-called short-term ethnographies, resulting into 'quick descriptions' cannot be regarded as ethnography, since these are more snapshots of a particular setting. Due to practical reasons however, this study has chosen to take on a short time frame for the ethnographic study to take place: ten days, spread over the course of four weeks. The researcher went along for two days with each of the mechanics, of whom there were five mechanics in total (three in the work field of gas, two in the work field of electricity).

3.1.6   Observing and participating
Due to the specialist knowledge required for the work of the mechanics studied and the hazardous environment in which they work, for the sixth sensibility of observing and participating a mere observational approach was chosen. However, the researcher did participate in some cases, for example by cleaning parts of an electrical installation. Most of the mechanics did explain their work to the researcher as though she was a student.

3.1.   Supplementing
Neyland (2007) suggests the option of supplementing the organizational ethnography with research methods such as interviews to elicit further information. For this study interviews were used to gain a deeper knowledge of the cognition of the mechanics about their job and to complement the observations.

3.1.8   Writing
Since this study takes place in a scholarly manner, the data collected in the ethnography was structured into a scholarly representation, addressing a certain question. The data itself was not recorded in order to be certain of an equal relationship between researcher and participant. Some fieldnotes were taken either on paper or by using the notes application of a smartphone, although these served more as mnemonic for later use when the fieldnotes were transcribed into a logical story about the going about of the days.

3.1.9   Ethics
In order to meet the ethical requirements, the study was judged by the ethical committee of the University of Twente. Furthermore, during specific, dangerous situations, the researcher and organization agreed that the participating employee had full authority over the researcher. The participants were also told that they were not required to tell things they did not want to tell the researcher, even though all the participants declared they did not feel as though they had to keep things for the researcher. An informed consent form was signed by all participants, in which they approved upon participating in the study. This form explained to the mechanics that the data would be written down, but that it would be altered in such a way that it would be irreducible and anonymous. The form can be found in Appendix I. Furthermore, an explanation of the study was give, which can be found in Appendix II.

3.1.10 Exits

Neyland describes that it can be considered to quit, or exit an ethnographic study. For this particular study, due to the unexpected event of a participant getting ill and time constraints of the ethnographer, the amount of participants was reduced from six to five and thus the amount of days the ethnography took was reduced from twelve to ten.

3.2 The participants

As is the norm for qualitative research, the participants were chosen through non-probability sampling. A homogeneous, purposive sample was taken. Because of the nature of the study and the importance of the participants being blue-collar workers, the participants of the study had to meet the requirements of being with the organization for more than five years and performing a job which is typically a blue-collar occupation, with no managerial tasks whatsoever. The demand of working for more than five years at the organization was included to be assured that the participants had been around the organization long enough to have an in-depth knowledge of the organization and the job. One of the team managers in the region the ethnography took place assigned six mechanics who fit the sample and were willing to participate.

As can be seen in Table 2, the five mechanics participating in the study were all male, in the age of 25 to 58 years old, being employed by the organization from 9 till 31 years. All of the mechanics worked at the department of 'breakdown and maintenance'. Two of the mechanics worked at the part of the organization responsible for the electric grid in the center of the Netherlands. Their jobs consisted of the maintenance of commutator or exchange stations, the maintenance of electricity meters in homes, the detection of power cuts and the reparation of power cables. The other three mechanics worked at the part of the organization responsible for the gas grid in the center of the Netherlands. Their jobs, although dealing with different specializations, can be compared to that of the electrical mechanics. It consisted of the maintenance of gas stations, the maintenance of gas meters in homes and the reparation of gas pipes. One mechanic was also responsible for "switching off" the gas supply when needed, for example when a gas pipe was added to the grid. All of the mechanics were very hospitable in taking on a person for two work days, most of them explained what they were doing during the day and they talked about personal as well as professional affairs.

Table 2.

Characteristics of the participants

	Nickname	Age	Organizational tenure	Working field
Participant #1	Ronald	58	19	Gas
Participant #2	Bram	49	15	Gas
Participant #3	Martijn	25	9	Gas
Participant #4	Julian	48	10	Electrics
Participant #5	Theo	49	31	Electrics

3.3 The ethnography itself

Before the start of the data collection, no inquiry whatsoever was done, in order to go into the study as blank as possible. The 8-hour working days of the mechanics consisted of going along to solve problems with gas or electrics for customers, restoring the grid in the case of breakdowns or gas leaks and reparations and maintenance of stations. With some mechanics, a lot of time was spent driving around in their van, however, whereas there were days with other mechanics that consisted of staying in one place for the entire day. The theoretical background of the study was kept in mind during the observations and in the conversations with the mechanics, for example, extra attention was paid to pro-active work behavior and activities clearly pointing towards ownership. This included behavior of which it was clear that it did not fit the job description (this ranged from helping a

customer out by setting up an appointment with a plumber to help other workers at a sight by digging up the ground). However, the objective was to get a thorough and detailed insight in the day of the mechanics, which encompassed that a view of 'strangeness' was taken upon: things observed were regarded as strange and the attitude of the researcher was as least judgmental as possible. When the mechanic was doing his administration, notes were taken of things that had been observed or spoken of. These notes were taken on paper, but mostly on a smartphone. The choice not to make audio recordings had been made intentionally due to issues with sound when walking on a site as well as recordings getting in the way of gaining the trust of the participants, which is a very important aspect of an ethnographic study. Some of the participants even informed the researcher they were happy they were not recorded.

3.4   Data and analysis

As mentioned before, the fieldnotes were transcribed into five stories, one for each mechanic, giving a description of the mechanics age, the tenure at the organization and his work activities for the organization, as well as a description of what happened and what was discussed during the two days. This produced a document of a total of 18 pages. The level of detail in these stories has been kept to a moderate point, though keeping in the aspects that were relevant to the study. This entails that sometimes specific details of work activities were left out, while other events were described more into detail.

For example the following fragment of a processed field note:

> *We are driving through the entire region that day, during which a lot of jokes are made when Ronald is calling with the planner about where to go next. A striking saying they both used was "The longer the ride, the less the dig". With this, they mean that if a person is on the road for a long time, they mostly don't have to do much digging work anymore, since others have already arrived to do these work activities. (Participant #1)*

The collected data were coded axially. Part of the data was categorized by using the three routes of psychological ownership. Passages that had to do with feelings of intimately knowing the job, controlling the job or investing the self in the job were given a certain color and these sections were split into a classification of low, medium or high, which was included as a remark in the document. The categorization was done with the help of the existing measurement on the routes of psychological ownership. Furthermore, passages describing pro-active behavior fitting the job crafting actions of task crafting, relational crafting and cognitive crafting were noticed and marked with a color as well. The categories of the routes towards psychological ownership and job crafting were connected to each other. The categorizations appointed to the text were discussed with a colleague-graduate student in order to limit the subjectivity to inter-subjectivity.

The following example of an fragment shows what high control of the target (job) looks like, since in this fragment the mechanic himself decides how to go about the procedure of doing the job. He also takes on a role of 'leader' by delegating the other mechanics:

> *When we arrive at the construction site, I notice how Julian takes the lead in what needs to be done. The other mechanics with whom he is working for the day, are younger: they are both in their late twenty's. Julian delegates the tasks that need to be done: we are going downstairs in the garage to take a look at the cable trays and the other two mechanics are asked to go upstairs, into the houses where the cables that have been damaged and thus need to be replaced are connected to the fuse box. Before going into the garage, Julian reports us to the lead contractor of the site. After receiving a skeleton key, the other mechanics head into the apartments above the garage to disconnect the cables in the fuse box. (Participant #4)*

An example of a fragment about knowing the target (job) is:

There are all sorts of stations: not one is the same, according to Bram. This is also what he likes most about his job: the knowledge about the technique when working on a station, with as extra bonus the differences between the stations. At a certain point, he shows me a collection of pictures in a folder on his tablet of different gas stations. He took these pictures himself. [...] You really need to know all the ins and outs of this job to do this job. (Participant #2)

This fragment shows that the mechanic has a deeper understanding of and a lot of knowledge about his job.

A relatively compact example of a fragment about investing the self in the target (job) is the following:

In between the work activities, we drink coffee and eat lunch in the van of one of the two men. We discuss how every mechanic decorates and adjusts their own van. The other mechanic, with whom Theo is working for the day, compares his van to that of Theo's. The van of Theo as a built-in bench and table to sit at. (Participant #5)

The results of this analysis will be discussed in the next chapter.

4   RESULTS

In which ways does psychological ownership manifest itself in blue-collar work and how is psychological ownership perceived by people in a blue-collar occupation?

This main question of the study will be answered through the analyzation of the data. Job crafting was used as a lens to look through to determine how psychological ownership shows itself among blue-collar workers. This next chapter will uncover how psychological ownership manifests itself amongst blue-collar workers. This will be discussed on the basis of four aspects: the object level, the job level, the organizational level and relationships.

4.1   Object level

Feelings of psychological ownership can be formed towards tangible objects, as well as intangible objects such as a job or organization. The former, ownership towards tangible objects, can however contribute to the feelings of ownership on the job and organizational level.

4.1.1.   Alterations of objects

Particularly the van seemed to be an object of which the mechanics develop feelings of ownership: the mechanics spoke in words of "mine" or "my" when they mentioned the van. Furthermore, the mechanics decorated their vans with pictures from their children, a pennon of their favorite soccer club and alterations are made to the van to make the job easier or more comfortable. The following fragments give an idea of how the van of a mechanic plays a role in feelings of ownership.

Even though Ronald did not get the message that I would join him in his work days, he immediately comes to pick me up after the phone call from his supervisor. After the acquaintance during a cup of coffee, we get into the van. Before I get in, Ronald takes the stuff off of the passenger seat and pushes away a construction that is handmade. It is some sort of board between the two seats, on which he can place his tablet and black diary. He made this board himself, because it makes his job easier to do, since the work activities he does are very short of nature and he needs to fill in information on his tablet a lot. (Participant #1)

In the morning he always starts with a cup of coffee and in the meanwhile he fills in the administration of the day before on his tablet, which he places on the steering wheel of the van. On the wheel I see some sort of 'jut'. If I ask him later about this thing that is attached to the steering wheel, he explains that he attached it himself. He finds it comfortable to use while driving. (Participant #2)

We drive into the parking lot and while I am still sitting in the passenger's seat, I look at the other vehicles on the terrain. There is one van that particularly catches my eye. The entire dashboard of this van is filled with puppets of the character Bert, from the television show Sesame Street. I smile and when I ask the mechanic with whom I am going along for the day about it, he explains to me that the owner of the van is called Bert. I discover that almost everyone has some sort of way to recognize their own van amongst the others. This is Bert's' way of showing that the vehicle is his. (Participant #3)

In between the work activities, we drink coffee and eat lunch in the van of one of the two men. We discuss how every mechanic decorates and adjusts their own van. The other mechanic, with whom Theo is working for the day, compares his van to that of Theo's. The van of Theo has a built-in bench and table to sit at. (Participant #5)

These four fragments all point out that these mechanics have a high investment of self and high levels of control over their job, which is manifested through the behavior of task crafting. By creating a task that is not required for the mechanics to do (making alterations to the van), the mechanics take control over their job and they use their control to invest their own time, creative ideas and maybe even money into the specific part of their job that has to deal with their van.

During one of the steps, Ronald takes a handmade tool out of his toolbox. He later explains that this tool is handmade: it helps him to do his job quicker. (Participant #1)

This particular fragment, which is not about the van, is another example of a mechanic who has literally created something to help him do his job better. He did this through investing his own thought, time and effort to create this tool.

On an object level, the feelings of ownership were most apparent towards the van, because of the high levels of control and investment of self that manifested through the job crafting behavior of task crafting. This might be an indication for more feelings of ownership towards the job as a whole, which is even more probable in the example of the participant who created his own object to make his job more easy to do.

4.2   Job level

4.2.1   Tasks and alterations to tasks

On the level of tasks that needed to be done in order for a mechanic to do his job, there was a clear separation between tasks for which the mechanic had much freedom on how to fulfill the task and tasks which were very strict due to procedures. Especially on the task-level it became particularly clear that psychological ownership expresses itself through job crafting activities. When control is low, there seem to be no job crafting activities as well. The following fragments are examples of mechanics crafting a task and having high control over these tasks:

In the meanwhile (we are replacing broken cables at a building sight), Julian replaces one of the fuses on the building site, since the power went off for some part. (Participant #4)

What he likes about the job is that you get a lot of freedom in how you do your job. You get to drive around on your own and decide for yourself how to give substance to your day. (Participant #5)

In the first fragment, the mechanic replaces a fuse: this is not expected of him. However, while he is on the building site, he might as well do so in order to help the construction workers to go along and do their job. This action came completely naturally. In the second fragment, the degrees of freedom that a mechanic has in his job, was discussed as being a major asset of the job. Multiple mechanics spoke about not having the feeling that they are being checked upon strictly. These feelings of having a lot of control, lead towards task crafting behaviors, such as replacing fuses when this is not expected from a mechanic to do in a certain situation.

The following fragments are examples of mechanics following procedures, thus having little to no control, meaning that there did not appear to be job crafting behaviors:

Ronald is responsible for complaints about the fuse box of a house. This entails that he replaces pressure regulators that are part of the electrical meter in someone's house. [...] When replacing a pressure regulator, Ronald always follows the same procedure. (Participant #1)

[When a damaged power cable needs to be dug op to be repaired] According to the procedures, a call has to be made before they can start digging. This has to do with safety. Julian calls a certain number to get permission. Everyone is discussing how annoying this works. They talk about

this being normal for the organization: there are sometimes so many rules that make the job more complicated than necessary. (Participant #4)

The station is positioned on a business park, so Theo puts the van as close as possible to the building in which the station is situated. The station is located in a building, but it is accessible from the outside. Together with the other mechanic, Theo follows an entire procedure to redirect the power, to assure that people don't end up without electricity when we are doing the maintenance of the station. After every step in the procedure, Theo needs to make a call to a number to get clearance for the next step. (Participant #5)

Even though the mechanics spoke about having a lot of freedom and thus control in doing their job, in some situations this is not the case. These situations are mostly characterized by a high amount of procedures due to safety precautions. What is striking about these findings, is that that this does not depend on the person: both participant number four and participant number five had situations during which they could exercise a lot of control over what they were doing and situations during which they lacked control. When there was little or no control, the proactive behavior that showed in the previous fragments, was missing.

When it comes to the task-level of feelings of psychological ownership, it is striking that both high and low levels of control are present. Low levels of control are mainly caused by procedures belonging to the job. When a mechanic has control over a situation or task, this is mostly expressed through the creation of tasks that are not part of the job description.

4.2.2   Job and alterations to the job

When it comes to the job itself, conversations about the job and the alterations mechanic (cognitively) make of their job, ownership and job crafting activities come together. For example, the following fragment shows an example of a mechanic crafting his job cognitively:

It occurred that Ronald did more than his job description asked him to. For example, by replacing a part on a meter that did not have to be replaced. We also came to work at people of age, from whom one person was demented and the other person deaf-mute. When a gas leak was found inside their house, he called a plumber for them to explain the situation so it could be fixed. Normally, this is not allowed for a mechanic to do. […] About his current job he tells me that you come at all sorts of places, you experience all sorts of stuff and "sometimes you're just like a social worker". (Participant #1)

This particular fragment shows how the mechanic does tasks that are not expected of him to do, by helping these elderly people to fix the gas leak in their house. This is an example of task crafting. However, by telling later on during the ethnography that he feels as though he is a social worker, it becomes clear that this person does something more than just creating new tasks to do his job: he cognitively crafts his job as well, by stating that he is something more than just a mechanic. It seems as though this mechanic can engage in these job crafting behaviors, because of the opportunity to take control and to invest himself into his job, in the particular situation of helping the elderly people and other situations in which he helps people as well.

When a person is able to cognitively craft his job, it could mean they feel as though they are empowered to do so: that they own the job in such a manner, that they can reframe their job as being something different as well to what the job description itself says about the job. Thus, on a job-level the routes towards the creation of feelings of ownership appear to be strong if a person cognitively crafts his or her job. This could mean that feelings of ownership towards a job are highest when a person is able to cognitively craft his or her job.

4.2.3 Deeper understanding and knowledge of the job

The deep knowledge the mechanics have of their field becomes clear especially in conversations with them and in their explanation about the activities that they are doing. The mechanics were completely at ease doing their jobs and their familiarity with the proceedings of the job were very clear, in the fragment following, the mechanic was maybe even too familiar with this specific task of the job.

In the afternoon we replace another pressure regulator. He tells me that it is his biggest nightmare to only have to replace pressure regulators as his job. He think it is numbing work. He would rather be out, repairing the pipes. (Participant #3)

Participant #2 especially had a deep knowledge and understanding of the job he does:

There are all sorts of stations: not one is the same, according to Bram. This is also what he likes most about his job: the knowledge about the technique when working on a station, with as bonus the differences between the stations. At a certain point, he shows me a collection of pictures in a folder on his tablet of different gas stations. He took these pictures himself. […] "You really need to know all the ins and outs of this job to do this job." In the days I spent with him, this seems to be a main theme, it becomes clear to me that this is really important to him. I also notice how he can explain everything he does to me – in detail – and how passionate and specialist he is in the work he does. He tells me during the first day that other guys see his job as cleaning, since this is part of the maintenance of a station. He clearly has a different opinion about this himself. (Participant #2)

Another example is the following fragment:

The mechanics "look into the cable and listen to the cable" because short circuit can be heard when voltage is applied to the cable. This way, they discover where the cable is broken and needs to be replaced. (Mechanic #4)

Even though these examples do not reveal any particular job crafting behaviors, since these were all behaviors that are expected of the mechanics to do, it does give an insight into the depth of the knowledge about the job by the mechanics. With this amount of knowledge, it can be suspected that a person develops feelings of psychological ownership towards the job, because they might feel as though their job is an extension of themselves. It could be argued as well that deep knowledge will empower a mechanic to not only do their jobs according to the description, but to craft alternate tasks or expand current tasks with other tasks. Even though this connection in this particular case cannot be supported with statistical data, this seems to be a justifiable assumption since in most of the fragments job crafting behaviors of the mechanics that are clear.

On the job-level, feelings of psychological ownership manifest themselves in the tasks belonging to the occupation, in which having control and task crafting seem to be conditions to give rise to these feelings. Furthermore, cognitive crafting of the job seems to indicate feelings of ownership towards a job, since both control and investment of self are present.

4.3 Organizational level

4.3.1 Knowledge of the organization

The mechanics do not only possess deep knowledge about their work field. In some of the conversations held during the day it was clear that the mechanics had extensive knowledge about the organization as well. This became particularly clear when they discussed the organization amongst colleagues.

[...] Furthermore, he refers to the organization as 'the cumbersome body'. With this, he means that there are sometimes things suggested that should be changed, but that because of all the layers in the organization and all the rules, this suggestions are not taken into account. He uses the example of a role of Teflon they use to seal pipes. Apparently, there is some sort of thing coming from a spray can, that does the same, but leaving less of a mess. Since mess on pipes causes malfunctioning of the system, it would cause the mechanics to have to solve less malfunctions. He suggested this once, but they did not make a change. He was told the spray can was too expensive. When I ask him what he thinks about this, he says that he believes that someone with knowledge within the organization surely will have looked into it and is right, even though he thinks that it could have been different. (Participant #2)

This particular fragment shows an example of the participant with a high investment of self when he introduced a new idea, though a low level of control, since they did not accept the suggestion. The mechanic explains that this has to do with how things work at the organization, he even calls it the 'cumbersome body', making clear that he has a deep knowledge of the organization.

Another example comes from participants number one and number five, who reminisce of 'the good old days':

He tells me that the organization changed a lot, there are more rules than before. He tells a story about team nights during which all mechanics would drive to 'the shop' with their vans and they would have a talk to each other with some beers. He gets that this is not allowed anymore, but he also states that 'all these little pleasures are disappearing'. Something else that is not allowed anymore, is receiving something from customers, such as a tip. 'The rules state that you aren't even allowed to take an apple'. He tells me that it is difficult that everything is constantly changing and that he used to resist to change very much. He has come to the conclusion, however, that it is best to let it just happen. Soon there will be another change, when the organization will split off a particular part of their business. 'It's all a matter of pennies' is a often heard remark from Ronald. (Participant #1)

Meanwhile, in the car, Theo tells me he works for the organization for 31 years now. He tells me that the organization has become much more anonymous. He feels as though he is a number, instead of a person. Mechanics used to see each other more, but nowadays you officially work from home. Thus, the place everyone attends in the morning, is non-official. He tells me that he is glad that they have kept this place, to be able in the morning to have a talk with colleagues over coffee. He tells me that he think it is sad that the contact with co-workers has decreased. He beliefs you work better if you work with people you know. They used to have a fixed teammate as well, with whom they would do the maintenance of the stations, the colleague who Theo is working with today, used to be his teammate. Later on, word comes out that the mechanics are back to working in fixed duos. Theo seems glad with this news. (Participant #5)

These examples show deep knowledge of the organization, most probably due to the tenure of the mechanics at the organization. Even though the feelings toward the organization are not very positive, the participants are telling the researcher how it used to be better, they do show some type of involvement with the organization which can point towards feelings of psychological ownership towards the organization. Particularly when the behavior of the mechanics throughout the field days is taken into account, during which they did their job at ease and walked around as being familiar with the place. However, this does not have to mean that the mechanics feel as though the organization is theirs, it might say more about their commitment towards the organization. It is striking that in these two examples no job crafting behaviors whatsoever show themselves.

Conclusively, on the organizational level of feelings of psychological ownership, the deep knowledge of the organization seem to play the most important role. However, it can be argued if this depth of knowledge about the organization really points to organization-based feelings of psychological ownership. It is one thing to state that a person feels as though he owns his or her job, it is another thing to state that he or she feels as though he or she owns the organization he or she works for.

4.4   Psychological ownership and relationships

Whereas job crafting has a relational aspect to it, with its relational crafting, psychological ownership does not have a social component to it. Since the two concepts are very intertwined, this next fragment is an interesting example of a mechanic who engages in both task- and relational crafting, as well as an investment of his knowledge on this particular field on the job:

> *Just like his colleagues, Martijn picks me up at my front door. First, we go to 'the shop' to drink some coffee with the other mechanics, at 7.30 am. The mechanics are all chitchatting in a relaxed way, joking around. The primary topic of discussion is the work itself, during which anecdotes of events that happened on the job are told. During the chit chatter, I observe that many mechanics go to Martijn when they have a problem with or questions about their tablet. On the second day, with other colleagues, I still see mechanics approaching Martijn and asking him for his help with their ICT. When I ask him about this later, he tells me that he does not know why they do this, but that it 'kind of grew this way'. (Participant #3)*

This fragment shows how the mechanic is not required to help his colleagues with their ICT, but that this is a task which organically grew into his (non-official) job description. These particular activities change the relationship between him and his co-workers, since in this situation he transformed from a co-mechanic to a person to go to for help with ICT issues.

Relational crafting behaviors such as these could to be helpful to explain the concept of collective psychological ownership, in which a shared mind-set of feelings of ownership towards a target emerges through interactive dynamics between persons (J. L. Pierce & Jussila, 2010). These interactive dynamics seem to manifest themselves in relational crafting behaviors.

4.4.1   Division of roles
A particular part of relational crafting happened during the second day with participant number four, when some sort of natural division of roles occurred. The following fragment explains what happened:

> *When we arrive at the construction site, I notice how Julian takes the lead in what needs to be done. The other mechanics with whom he is working for the day, are younger: they are both in their late twenty's. Julian delegates the tasks that need to be done: we are going downstairs in the garage to take a look at the cable trays and the other two mechanics are asked to go upstairs, into the houses where the cables that have been damaged and thus need to be replaced are connected to the fuse box. Before going into the garage, Julian reports us to the lead contractor of the site. After receiving a skeleton key, the other mechanics head into the apartments above the garage to disconnect the cables in the fuse box. (Participant #4)*

  Control: high; task and relational crafting

This example shows how participant number four took control over the job by taking on the role of leader. In some cases, the role of leader was prescribed through work instructions. However, in this example, this was not expected of the mechanic. It seems as though he took on the role of leader because of both his organizational tenure and experience in the field. Since it was not expected of the mechanic to take on this role, this behavior can be seen as a form of relational crafting, since he

changed the nature of the relationship between him and his co-workers for this particular task. This is a form of task crafting as well, since he changed his own tasks when taking on the leadership role. These behaviors and the high levels of control underlying at these behaviors, suspect that this mechanic felt as though he owns his job in this particular circumstance.

The concept of psychological ownership is very focused on an individual level, in which other people do not take any part. The concept of collective psychological ownership already broadens this perspective. The result in this section give examples which can explain how these collective feelings of psychological ownership might manifest themselves: through relational crafting behaviors. By changing the nature of the relationship between co-workers, in a specific context, a joint sense of ownership might arise.

The consequences of these findings of psychological ownership on the object level, job level, organizational level and in the context of relationships, will be discussed in the following chapter.

5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study made use of the ethnographic method to uncover in which ways psychological ownership manifest itself in blue-collar work and how psychological ownership is perceived by people in a blue-collar occupation. The participants consisted of five mechanics in the field of utilities (gas and electrics). By observing and interviewing these mechanics for a total of ten days, the research contributed to a better understanding of the process of gaining feelings of ownership. Furthermore, this study questioned the statement by Brown et al. (2014) that a person with a low complex job is not able to have feelings of ownership.

The results show that, even though the occupation of a mechanic may be looked upon as low in complexity, according to the complexity measurement discussed in the theoretical framework, the results show that it is very much possible for a person in a low complex job to have feelings of ownership on different levels: object-based, job-based an organizational-based. Furthermore, the results show that the concept of psychological ownership and the concept of job crafting are intertwined. It seems that where a high sense of ownership is felt towards a target such as a job, job crafting behaviors take place as well. Moreover, feelings of ownership towards a target appear not to be a static state of mind: a person can for example have job-based feelings of ownership when doing a certain task while doing another task, the circumstances are not suitable for a person to have job-based feelings of ownership. Especially in tasks which were characterized by procedures, control of the participant was low and thus feelings of ownership could not arise. When the participants had high levels of control, job crafting behaviors took place and feelings of ownership seemed to arise.

Object-based feelings of psychological ownership appeared to express themselves mostly in the high levels in which the mechanics invested something of themselves into the job, which combines with the behavior of task crafting. This was most visible in the alterations mechanics made to their van. Feelings of ownership towards the job are most evident when the participants had many control and crafted their tasks, such as altering their time schedule. Furthermore, when a mechanic cognitively crafted his job, feelings of ownership towards the job seemed highest due to high levels of both control and investment of self. On the organizational-level, knowledge of the organization seemed to point towards feelings of ownership more than the other two routes. This route did not combine with any job crafting behaviors, which give rise to the question if there existed feelings of ownership towards the organization in the first place. On the organizational-level, a high level of knowledge may refer to high levels of commitment, instead of feelings of ownership.

Relational crafting behaviors as part of job crafting behaviors, shed another light on the understanding of collective feelings of psychological ownership. Since in relational crafting the nature of the relationship or interactions between people are changed, this form of crafting might give rise to a joint sense of ownership feelings. Thus, feelings of psychological ownership are not only situational but relational as well.

The results show that the concept of psychological ownership is far more nuanced than the measurements that have been developed to test this psychological concept to date.

5.1 Limitations and recommendations for future research

As with each study, this study has its limitations. Even though a qualitative study is very useful to go more into depth into a concept, this comes at a price. The results of the study, for example, are bound by their context and small sample size, meaning it is impossible to generalize. However, the intent of the study was not to result into concepts that could be tested empirically on large scale. The findings of the study are in some degree transferrable to future studies into the field of

psychological ownership. Taking on job crafting behaviors as a lens proved to be very insightful to gain a deeper understanding of feelings of ownership. It is recommended for future research to conduct a study focused solely on the connection between psychological ownership and job crafting, in order to get a better understanding of how this process actually works. Specifically the relational crafting behaviors can help to better understand the importance of relationships for feelings of psychological ownership. Studies into collective psychological ownership might benefit by using relational crafting as behavioral concepts that contribute to feelings of ownership.

Even though an ethnographic study is not able to support the results of the research with statistical data, for the particular context of this study, it showed to be a helpful method. At one point, the researcher asked the mechanics if they felt as though they owned their job, of which the reaction was to look at her strangely, repeat the question and keep quiet. This emphasizes that in some situations, a survey with psychological concepts will not do its job the way it supposed to do. That is why this study urges future research to take a critical look upon the method used for the study into psychological ownership, and to consider qualitative methods in certain contexts.

Furthermore, ethnographic studies are not known for their objectivity. Whereas in traditional survey research, the researcher has to take an objective stance, not influencing the items, in this type of studies the researcher should be taken into the equation. The researcher, with all of his or her observations, is of a large influence on the interpretation of the research and what parts are to be interpreted. It can be difficult for an ethnographer to keep the observations understandable for someone who has no knowledge of the field. On the other hand, no research method is better capable of getting a grip on the richness and level of detail of jobs.

Lastly, since this ethnographic study had limited time in comparison to regular ethnographies, it is recommended to conduct a long-term (ethnographic) study into the processes around feelings of ownership. For future studies, it is recommended to go even more into depth as this particular types of studies lend themselves perfectly to find out why a person has feelings of ownership.

5.2   Practical implications

With the results of this study pointing out that persons in a blue-collar occupation are able to have feelings of psychological ownership, the perspective of managers on the ways in which blue-collar workers such as mechanics go about in their job should be changed. These people are perfectly capable of taking control and making decisions for themselves. This urges the field to take another outlook on the degrees of freedom in which a person does his job and to experiment with giving blue-collar workers more control and helping them in exercising job crafting behaviors. Furthermore, a blue-collar occupation seems to be more complex than is assumed. On a societal level, as Rose (2005) emphasizes, blue-collar occupations are still looked upon as being less valuable in terms of cognition. When the emancipation of blue-collar occupations will take place, and it will be looked upon as an equal occupation compared to white-collar work, organizations may invest as much money, effort and time in this particular group of the working field as other groups. This will align the feelings between blue-collars and others of blue-collar workers making a difference to society. Society should prepare for this step since it became clear during this ethnographic study, that the mechanics are of great importance to our day-to-day lives.

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APPENDIX I   INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent

Title of the research: The way blue collar workers, work.

Responsible researcher: Paulien Zwiers

To be completed by the participant

I declare in a manner obvious to me, to be informed about the nature, method, target and [if present] the risks and load of the investigation. I know that the data and results of the study will only be published anonymously and confidentially to third parties. My questions have been answered satisfactorily.

I understand that photo content or operation thereof will be used only for analysis and / or scientific presentations.

I voluntarily agree to take part in this study. While I reserve the right to terminate my participation in this study without giving a reason at any time.

Name participant: …..……………………………………………………………………………………………..

Date: …………………..…………… Signature participant: …..……………………………………………………

To be completed by the executive researcher

I have given an spoken and written explanation of the study. I will answer remaining questions about the investigation into power. The participant will not suffer any adverse consequences in case of any early termination of participation in this study.

Name researcher: …………………………………………………………………………………..…………..

Date: …………………………………… Signature researcher: …………………...……………………………….

APPENDIX II EXPLANATION OF THE STUDY

Going along with Electrics & Gas Inc.

As part of my graduation research for Communication Studies at the University of Twente, I want to know how mechanics at Electrics & Gas Inc. do their job. That is why I will go along with six mechanics for two days. During these days I will be observing and asking questions in the meanwhile. The main question I want to answer is:

What makes your job, typically yours?

I won't evaluate if the job is performed correctly. Since I'm not a mechanic myself, I couldn't do so, even if I wanted to. I just want to know how it is to work at Electrics & Gas Inc., how it is to be a mechanic and what a person finds interesting or fun about his or her job.

After these two days I will make a report about "The day with John". The person with whom I went along will be the first to get to read this report. The study is anonymous and you won't be traceable. In the final report, nobody will know who participated in the study. This is very important, since I want to remain as close as possible to a normal working day. I am aiming to make two good days of it, during which everybody feels comfortable.

To guarantee this, I will ask you to sign an informed consent, in which you give your consent to participate in the study. This also states that you can withdraw from the study when you want to.

When the study is over, and I hopefully will have received my diploma, the participants will receive feedback about the results of the investigation.

Paulien Zwiers

Contact information