TWO SIDES OF THE SAME COIN

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF COLLECTIVE PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP IN FLAT TEAM STRUCTURES

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Abstract

There has been a shift in the foundation of organisational structure where companies are now organised to work project- or team-based, implying more flat organisations, and as a result flat team structures are more prominent than ever. This concept has for instance been characterised as a contributor to a more committed workforce and ultimately company success. In fact, many characteristics in these new flat team structures are attributed to what Pierce et al. (2009) describe as collective psychological ownership. However, when researchers have studied this phenomenon before, a larger emphasis has been placed on the positive effects of collective psychological ownership, lacking an understanding for its negative consequences and how these might affect flat team structures. This leaves the question: *What consequences does collective psychological ownership have within teams?* To be able to investigate this, the authors of this thesis have conducted a qualitative study within a team in a fast growing company in the Swedish tech industry. The study has shown that collective psychological ownership consists of benefits but also several negative consequences, such as a double-edged sword paradox and a diffusion of responsibility within teams. By understanding the consequences of collective psychological ownership within teams, teams can enhance their awareness and knowledge regarding the backside of collective psychological ownership, and ultimately improve their internal dynamics. The findings of this thesis help to inform the consequences of collective psychological ownership, and it contributes to the explanation of why some organisations have not implemented flat team structures as a way to enhance employee commitment.

Keywords: collective psychological ownership, flat organisations, employee commitment, diffusion of responsibility, growth companies

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Bachelor Thesis

Bachelor Program in Management

Stockholm School of Economics

Acknowledgments

We would like to direct our sincerest thanks to all those who made the writing of this thesis possible. Thank you to all those at Company X who allowed us to conduct this study and took the time to participate.

To our supervisor, *Ingela Sölvell*, thank you for your valuable input which challenged us to always improve. To our peers, *Julia Hergart, Jennifer Ren Liu, Caroline Sandblom, Lydia Håkansson, Inga Eriksson,* and *Josephine Hedegård,* thank you for your feedback and constructive discussion throughout the writing process.

Lastly, thank you to all those who have supported us throughout this process and given constructive feedback. Without you, this would not have been possible.

Thanks!
Lucas & Isabelle

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1.   Introduction

1.1 Background

Today's digital world has shaken the foundation of organisational structure, shifting from the traditional functional hierarchy to a network of teams (Sommerfeld, 2016). Work teams have increasingly become the cornerstone of the post bureaucratic organisation, making it important for firms to understand the design and optimisation of teamwork (Pierce et al., 2019). The outdated matrix structure era is over, and companies are now organised to work project- or team-based, implying more flat organisations that make it easier to be agile and adapt to new challenges (Bersin, 2016).

Flat organisations entail fewer levels of management and have been portrayed as having several benefits (Kastelle, 2019). These benefits are promoted by flat team structures where a more decentralised and collective decision-making process is present (Parnell, 2014). The teams are associated with better internal collaboration than in traditional pyramid structures for instance, with improved commitment and satisfaction amongst members (Craig, 2018; Brunet-Thornton, 2020). In these flat team structures, the above mentioned characteristics are attained and shaped by what Pierce et al. (2009) describe as *collective psychological ownership*. Flat team structures and collective psychological ownership thereby often co-exist as flat team structures provide the context in which collective psychological ownership arises. Collective psychological ownership is characterised by teams with high levels of psychological safety and a sense of belonging amongst team members, resulting in a collaborative environment with high commitment and participation (Verkuyten, 2017; Pierce et al., 2009). This phenomenon is most prominent when members have a material or immaterial object to own, such as a project.

Furthermore, studies have found a link between a company's success and the share of commitment their employees feel, ranking highly committed employees a top priority in the complexity of today's business world (Sull, 2014). Since flat team structures, and thereby collective psychological ownership, are characterised as contributors to a more committed workforce and ultimately company success, it leaves the question – Why have not all organisations introduced flat team structures yet?

Although this concept has benefits, flat team structures have shown negative outcomes, such as being increasingly difficult to uphold as an organisation grows (Craig, 2018). These outcomes are most prominent in fast-growing flat organisations. With growth, a highly committed workforce created by flat teams and collective psychological ownership can become increasingly difficult to maintain, as there is more pressure on the need for structured and effective communication amongst team members. The lack of this can lead to difficulties in the decision making process (Rishipal, 2014). So if flat team structures have negative

outcomes, how does collective psychological ownership's own consequences contribute to these?

The consequences of collective psychological ownership have been studied by different researchers before (e.g. Pierce et al., 2009; Verkuyten, 2017; Giordano et al., 2019). However, a larger emphasis has been placed on the positive effects of collective psychological ownership, lacking an understanding for its negative consequences. This current research gap raises questions such as: Can collective psychological ownership be the catalyst for the negative outcomes of flat team structures? To what extent do flat organisations experience any drawbacks of collective psychological ownership? What effect does collective psychological ownership have within teams on a growing organisation? As mentioned above, a committed workforce can lead to a organisation's success but as the organisation grows the same commitment may become an obstacle to its productivity. This illustrates the possible double-edged aspect of collective psychological ownership. Because of the intertwined nature of collective psychological ownership and flat team structures, collective psychological ownership should play a role in explaining the difficulties of highly committed teams and collective decision making, especially when an organisation grows. Based on that, we suggest there are always *two sides of the same coin*, as collective psychological ownership entails negative consequences as well as positive.

To be able to investigate this phenomenon, this thesis aims to analyse collective psychological ownership within a team in a fast growing company in the Swedish tech industry. In particular, the study will focus on the consequences of collective psychological ownership and how this affects a team. The thesis is structured as follows; firstly, we will introduce the formulation of our proposed research question. Secondly, the theoretical framework for this thesis is presented followed by the introduction of the study object, and a presentation of the methodology employed to conduct the study. We then present and analyse the empirics collected. Lastly, a discussion of the results is presented along with potential directions for future research.

1.2 Purpose and research question

The purpose of this study is to enhance the understanding of how collective psychological ownership's own consequences contribute to shaping the negative outcomes of flat team structures, and how this affects employee commitment. This can be attributed to the current research gap regarding the consequences of collective psychological ownership, more specifically negative ones, within teams at growth companies as mentioned above. The research question is therefore:

What consequences does collective psychological ownership have within teams at growth companies?

1.3 Delimitation

This study has been delimited to a specific division within a fast-growing Swedish tech company. We have delimited the focus of the study to viewing the consequences of collective psychological ownership through the lens of projects under a unit team. The unit team takes part in the majority of projects within the company allowing us to analyse the consequences at a core level, where the behaviour caused by collective psychological ownership takes a clear shape and is more easily understood.

The interview subjects were delimited to employees occupying roles within the specific unit team. This delimitation was done to gain a larger perspective of how having flat team structures, and therefore collective psychological ownership, has had consequences on multiple projects rather than one. By interviewing employees within the team that have been a part of multiple projects, we gain a deeper understanding of the shared experiences of working in project teams, enabling the analysis of the consequences of collective psychological ownership formed by the unit as a whole.

2. Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework has been divided into three categories: previous research, collective psychological ownership, and diffusion of responsibility to enable a thorough analysis of how collective psychological ownership can affect teams.

2.1 Previous research

2.1.1 Characteristics of flat team structures

One of the main researchers on organisational structure was Henry Mintzberg, who introduced flat organisations (*adhocracy)* as complex organisations with sophisticated specialists whose efforts are best combined when in project teams (Mintzberg, 1981). Flat organisations are often characterised by horizontal relationships due to employees working within flat team structures (Gerlach, 2019). Research has further analysed the potential benefits and drawbacks of implementing a flat team structure (e.g. Kubheka et al., 2013; Rishipal, 2014). Schenkel et al. (2016) highlighted the positive effects of flat team structures suggesting that allowing employees more autonomy results in innovative behaviour as well as creative self efficacy. Furthermore, studies have identified a positive relationship between flat team structures and increased employee commitment (Brooks, 2002). However, flat team structures have also been linked to negative outcomes such as hindering the successful growth of an organisation (Astley, 1985). This has been further emphasised through research suggesting that it becomes increasingly difficult to coordinate the monitoring of employees, often resulting in a reliance on peer control to uphold accountability (Martela, 2019).

2.1.2 Evolution of collective psychological ownership

The vast majority of researchers (e.g. Jussila et al., 2005; Vandewall et al., 1995; O'Driscoll et al., 2006) have focused on the impacts of psychological ownership on an individual level. Previous research has mainly focused on phenomenons such as possession and the psychology of mine (Cram et al., 1993, Vandewall et al., 1995). The progression of the research resulted in the application of the concept of psychological ownership in an organisational context. Research highlighted potential positive consequences of psychological ownership and employee behaviour to drive the organisation forward (Azka et al., 2011). This research was paralleled with shedding light on the role of psychological ownership in organisational behaviours such as performance, territoriality, and assumption of responsibility (Druskat et al, 2002; Brown et al., 2013). These behaviours have, however, been linked to negative outcomes of flat team structures such as the possible decrease in performance consistency (Rishipal, 2014).

The concept of psychological ownership has eventually also evolved from being viewed as primarily an individual phenomenon to ownership at a team level, taking on the name *collective* psychological ownership. In 2009, Pierce and Jussila published the first research paper introducing the construct of collective psychological ownership. The construct has

generally been introduced as arising in flat organisations, with an emphasis being placed on the phenomenon taking shape within teams. In their paper, the researchers outlined the genesis of collective psychological ownership as well as its benefits. However, the researchers also indicated potential negative consequences attributed to the phenomenon, but never tested the theory empirically.

2.1.3 The applicability of theories

The application of flat team structures and psychological ownership into an organisation has been widely discussed in previous research, where focus has been placed on the application of these on a large scale, applying to different industries and organisations. In general, researchers suggest several different positive implications regarding psychological ownership within teams. An example is the study carried out by Chi and Han (2010) in which they analysed the relationships between employee commitment and formal ownership programs, as well as psychological ownership for the organisation. The study analysed employees at high-tech firms and found a positive relationship between employee commitment in profit sharing, decision making, access to business information and psychological ownership.

The research on psychological ownership has also been highly focused on the different behaviours which arise out of it in teams. Some researchers argue that the sense of responsibility accompanied by psychological ownership is more likely to lead to proactive acts and positive consequences within teams. These acts are extra-role behaviours, behaviours that are not formally rewarded by the organisation (Vandewalle et al., 1995). On the other hand, the research on flat team structures has been highly focused on the negative outcomes regarding these behaviours within teams. A study carried out by Kurstedt et al. (1991) analysed for instance flat team structures in a multi-project research organisation, and showed that flat team structures can in practice have more negative outcomes than positive ones. The researchers found that the lack of a leader within the team created a diffusion of responsibility amongst team members, thus decreasing employee commitment. However, research has been lacking regarding the negative consequences associated with collective psychological ownership (Cocieru et al., 2019).

2.2 Research gap

Previous research has highlighted the negative outcomes associated with flat team structures in growth companies. However, to our knowledge, there is a lack of understanding of how collective psychological ownership's own consequences contribute in shaping these outcomes. This can be explained by the research gap regarding collective psychological ownership's own consequences. Additionally, there has been a lack of application of the theory of collective psychological ownership empirically, which limits the understanding of how the phenomenon takes shape in practice. This is further emphasised by the aforementioned shift of many companies to working in team settings, making it highly relevant to investigate how collective psychological ownership might impact work teams. We

therefore see a need for applying the theory of collective psychological ownership to a study object such as a unit team at a growth company. Based on that, this study will therefore aim to investigate the phenomenon of collective psychological ownership at a study object, as well as contribute to decreasing the gap in research around the negative consequences of collective psychological ownership within teams.

2.3 Collective Psychological Ownership
2.3.1 Origin of Collective Psychological Ownership
The concept of collective psychological ownership was first introduced by Jon L. Pierce and Iiro Jussila in 2009. The concept was seen as a development of the previously widely researched phenomenon of individual ownership and deeming an object as "mine". Building on this construct, Pierce and Jessica developed the concept of collective psychological ownership defining it as "a group of individuals who consider themselves an "us" can come to a "single and shared mind-set" as it pertains to a sense of ownership for some object that is material or immaterial in character." (Pierce et al., 2009, p.811). The research on collective psychological ownership has been centered around two views: ownership of an organisation or a job and ownership of an object or idea. (Giordano et al., 2019).

The journey towards collective psychological ownership has been researched and theorised into three stages: (i) the motives underpinning this psychological state, (ii) the routes people travel down which give rise to a sense of ownership, and (iii) some of its positive and negative outcomes (Giordano et al., 2019). The genesis of psychological ownership is driven by two schools of thought: the biological approach and the social constructionist view. Lee Ellis concluded in 1985 that possessive behaviour appears to be present in all human societies and is an innate feature that humans share with primates. This is evident through the establishment of constructs such as property (Ellis, 1985). The social constructionist view emerges from the concept that ownership occurs as a result of an increasing awareness of social relationships and maturation (Furby, 1978). From these views, Pierce et al. suggest that ownership results due to three human motives: efficacy, self-identity, and having a place (Pierce et al,. 2002).

2.3.2 Elements of Collective Psychological Ownership
In the original paper, Pierce et al. (2009) outline elements which aid in the identification of collective psychological ownership in a team. These are (i) psychological safety, (ii) group learning, (iii) group potency, and (iv) sense of belonging/group identity, as seen in Image 1.
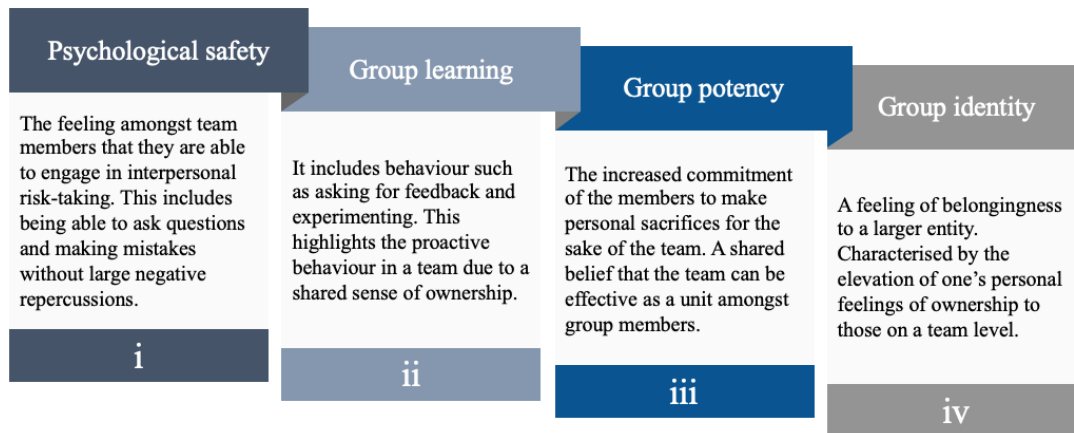
Image 1. Elements of collective psychological ownership

2.3.3 Consequences of Collective Psychological Ownership

The potential consequences of collective psychological ownership have been researched and include aspects such as employee commitment and territoriality. Researchers have however placed a larger emphasis on the potential benefits than drawbacks. Druskat (2002) suggested that the more shared a mental model is amongst a team, the better the team performs. Feelings of "ours" can result in an increased investment of time and energy in maintaining and improving a target. A sense of collective psychological ownership can have positive effects on team relations by binding people together and creating a sense of a shared goal (Verkuyten, 2017). This sense of a shared goal can also be enhanced by communication and use of information amongst team members (Thompson, 1967). Furthermore, a sense of ownership can result in an increased participation in decision-making as well as employee commitment. These activities feed into each other as the sense of control related to participating in decision-making creates a feeling of ownership (Dawkins et al., 2015). However, collective psychological ownership may also result in negative consequences.

Previous research has suggested potential similarities between the negative consequences of collective psychological ownership and psychological ownership. When an employee feels psychological ownership towards a project, and an organisational representative imposes subtractive or revolutionary changes on that project, it is likely for the employee to experience negative emotions (Cocieru et al., 2019). This is related to the above mentioned sense of control and possession that comes with psychological ownership. The dark side of psychological ownership can thereby arise when those who experience ownership resist changes imposed on a target, such as a project. Psychological ownership can thereby have a 'double-edged sword' effect in teams, having positive effects during stable times but can become destructive during change (Cocieru et al., 2019). Psychological ownership has also been related to defending behaviour. When individuals feel ownership towards an object they will engage in claiming behaviour; marking their territory. When this object is removed from possession, owners will engage in defensive behaviour to prevent others from taking what is

seen as exclusively theirs (Brown et al., 2013). In their original paper introducing the concept of collective psychological ownership, Pierce et al. (2009) mention potential negative consequences of collective psychological ownership, such as the diffusion of responsibility in teams.

"[...] diffusion of responsibility and social loafing are frequently observed in group settings [...]" (Pierce et al., 2009, p.827)

2.4 Diffusion of responsibility

Diffusion of responsibility can occur as the result of the knowledge that, when in a team, one is deciding upon an action collectively rather than by oneself (Wallach et al., 1963). Latane was one of the first researchers on this topic and theorised the Social Impact Theory to offer predictions on how responsibility diffuses in teams of varying sizes, concluding that the largest drop in responsibility occurs when a second individual joins a lone person (Latane, 1981). The research on diffusion of responsibility has often been associated with the bystander effect or apathy. Three factors are considered as influencing bystander apathy, one of them being the feeling of having less responsibility when other bystanders are present (Hortensius et al., 2018). However, the phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility is also present in the work context on a team level. A study discusses that the lack of a leader within the team creates a diffusion of responsibility amongst team members which decreases employee commitment (Kurstedt et al, 1991). Furthermore, Forsyth et al. (2001) predicted that individuals claim personal responsibility for team successes but disclaim responsibility for team failures, highlighting the egocentric tendencies in teams. These tendencies emphasise the role of consequences in the assumption of responsibility, highlighting the two main aspects of the theory: accountability and decision making, which are presented below.

2.4.1 Accountability

The development of strong feelings of mutual responsibility depends on the team standing to lose or gain something from an external consequence (Wallach et al., 1963). Research on escalation behaviour suggests that individuals will escalate their commitment towards something when they are seen as personally responsible or accountable in the form of facing external consequences (Rutledge et al., 1994). A study carried out by Kathleen M. O'Connor analysed the result of accountability on teams, in which she draws a parallel to responsibility. Similarly to the phenomenon of diffusion of responsibility, making team members collectively accountable for their shared outcomes will result in a diffusion of accountability. The distribution of accountability amongst team members highlights how when the effect of an external consequence is spread amongst a team, individuals feel less responsible for the result (O'Connor, 1997).

2.4.2 Decision making

Decision making is an important organisational activity and the way in which teams make decisions can impact the performance of the firm. Research has highlighted how

environmental instability and a lack of structure can lead to less effective decision making (Dean et al., 1996). Researchers have theorised a link between diffusion of responsibility and the process of decision making in teams. Decision processes can be used as a tool for the allocation of responsibility. If a person is seen as being the cause of an event, he or she is by default also seen as responsible for it. The classical administrative perspective further highlights the role of authority in taking on responsibility. Authority at a higher level means individuals at a lower level can avoid taking on responsibility since authority at high level is accepted because it gives rise to responsibility (Brunsson, 1990). By making a decision as a collective unit, the individual members of the team can evade personal responsibility for any possible negative consequence. Decisions are therefore more likely to be made as a team rather than by one member (Whyte, 1991).

The visibility of the decision maker further enables the allocation of responsibility within a team. Highlighting the final decision maker in a decision process is often enabled through the use of structured processes such as formal meetings (Brunsson, 1990). The presence of process accountability can also lead to higher engagement and willingness to share information to make more thorough decisions (Scholten et al., 2007). Lack of visibility of the final decision maker can lead to individuals lessening their role as a decision maker, enabled through the lack of formal structures which may hold individuals accountable (Brunsson, 1990).

2.5 Theory discussion

A critique we want to discuss is the context in which collective psychological ownership takes place and how this may affect the way in which it is analysed. We realise the lack of consideration regarding how the setting in which the theory is applied might affect the understanding of the theory. However, we argue that the social constructionist nature of collective psychological ownership implies that the setting in which it is investigated in will always implicitly affect the outcome of the research. With that said, no empirical study will be able to forego this criticism.

Furthermore, previous research has largely focused on the cause of diffusion of responsibility in relation to the presence of team members. In contrast, we want to acknowledge the role of multiple factors in contributing to diffusion of responsibility, such as external circumstances. For this reason, we considered other factors such as the presence of external consequences from out-team members on diffusion of responsibility in teams to get a complete understanding of the theory applied. To further enhance the understanding of diffusion of responsibility we discuss the role of decision-making in this. A vast majority of research has discussed the main mechanism of decision making as the visualisation of who has the authority to make decisions. However in this study, we discuss the role this plays in the allocation of responsibility and how a lack of visibility can lead to negative consequences. By doing this, we are able to analyse the role of decision-making in contributing to the diffusion of responsibility within teams.

3. Methodology

The following section outlines our methodological choices when conducting this study. An emphasis is placed on introducing the chosen study object as well as explaining how a qualitative approach shaped the gathering of empirical evidence.

3.1 Choice of Method

3.1.1 Research paradigm

The study is written from the ontological position of constructionism, a subjectivist approach, where both of ours, as well as the respondents', experiences are treated as social constructs facing constant change. Since the main theory shaping this study has a social constructionist nature, this approach allows the study to see not what the truth is but rather each employee's individual truth, enabling us to understand the consequences of collective psychological ownership based on the respondents' individual perspectives (Bryman et al, 2015). By taking this approach, the research question could be answered without ignoring the fact that a team member's view on the consequences of collective psychological ownership may be subjected to change over time. Furthermore, the study builds on an interpretivist paradigm, as we attempt to arrive at an explanation for why collective psychological ownership has certain negative consequences within the unit team, by merging their own views of the social world with collected external data (Bryman et al, 2015). The study is based on the unit's team members' observations and interpretations about their own project management process, meaning that all empirical data had to be collected via qualitative research.

3.1.2 An inductive qualitative study

This study employed a largely inductive research approach, where the empirical data was primarily used to derive concepts and themes for analysis. The process entailed continuously moving back and forth between data analysis and the literature to make meaning out of emerging concepts. This approach was used to capture the most empirically grounded and theoretically interesting factors (Azungah, 2018). Due to the social constructivist nature of collective psychological ownership, an inductive approach was deemed as appropriate as it assures that the findings are grounded in context (Rodwell, 1998). In combination with this an exploratory research design was applied, since the main theory that shaped this study has been applied to limited research areas. This entailed finding key aspects of previous research around the consequences of collective psychological ownership which were used as a foundation to investigate other potential theories (Kvale, 1997). The empirical data could then guide us to the most relevant points within the theory.

In this case semi-structured interviews, where the interviewees can answer and guide the conversation to the most relevant topics, were conducted. We decided that this approach would be the most suitable, since the understanding of the case study must be reflected by,

and takes off from, the team members' own experiences. This method is also particularly helpful in the generation of an intensive and detailed examination of a case study (Bryman et al, 2015). In addition, semi-structured interviews could also guide us to potential negative consequences of the studied theory by letting the interviewees share their own experiences. This would have been more difficult to achieve with structured interviews.

3.2 A case study

We decided to have an idiographic approach and conduct a case study. This was chosen due to the current research gap regarding the consequences of collective psychological ownership, more specifically negative ones, within teams at growth companies. Furthermore, a case study can sharpen the existing theory by illustrating causal relationships more directly (Siggelkow, 2007). This approach was taken because of the social construct nature of collective psychological ownership, where the phenomenon might differ between different teams and is affected by several different external factors. This makes it unique and difficult to generalise via a cross-sectional study design.

3.2.1 Company X as a study object

Company X was founded in the mid-2000s in Stockholm and is currently one of Europe's fastest growing tech companies, with a compound annual growth of over 40%. In general, the company works in an agile manner characterised by collective decision-making, and a fast-paced environment. Agile working is a common trait amongst rapidly changing and technological organisations with a global perspective (Bäcklander, 2019).

We have decided to pick Company X as our study object because of the current phase it is in. The firm's entrepreneurial spirit with collectively taken decisions and a flat team structure has so far been seen as an asset. This combined with their rapid growth has made the organisation flexible to change and adapt. However, Company X's rapid growth is provoking issues that could be interpreted as a particular crisis. Structural problems within teams, such as a decrease in their decision making ability, are happening more frequently than ever. These issues can be explained by Greiner's Growth Model (Blomberg, 2017). According to the model, Company X might currently be facing its first crisis, which means a lack of structures and leadership in place. The crisis faced by Company X, flat teams in a growing company, therefore provides the ideal context to investigate what potential consequences collective psychological ownership has within teams.

3.2.2 Project Management at Company X

As the phenomenon of collective psychological ownership is prominent when teams own an immaterial object such as a project (Pierce et al., 2009), this study will focus on the project-based Innovation unit team to analyse the consequences of collective psychological ownership. The Innovation unit is a newly formed division that handles the majority of projects within the company, consisting of Business Developers, Service Designers, a Head

of Innovation and a Chief Development Officer, as seen in Image 2. For further role description see Appendix 1.
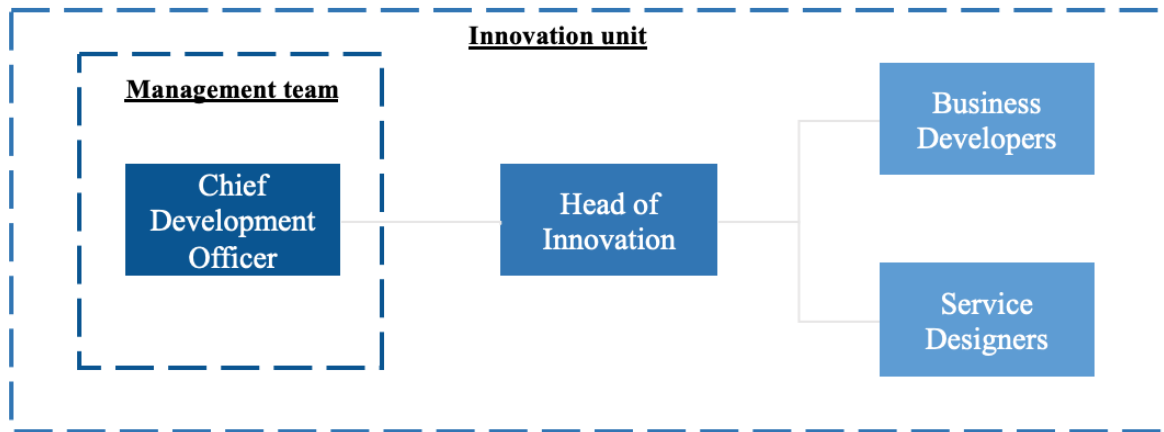

Image 2. Organisation chart for the Innovation unit.

The Innovation unit employs a funnel structure for its project management, beginning with a general idea and narrowing it down. In a project, members tend to have worked together already prior to being placed in a team since the Innovation unit is a small division. This small core team engages with a Steering group consisting of external stakeholders tri-weekly or monthly to engage in discussions and potential input/updates. The management team is also updated monthly on the progress and process of projects. The organisation of projects at the Innovation unit enhances the atmosphere of collectivism within the team as everyone is encouraged to participate. Furthermore, employees at any level are highly committed and encouraged to participate in the idea formation stage of the project, and external stakeholders, such as the management team, are regularly involved in the process. Although collective psychological ownership permeates the entire organisation, its presence is emphasised in teams working with projects. With that said, Company X, and particularly the Innovation unit team, offers the perfect setting to further explore and understand the phenomenon studied.

3.3 Data Gathering
3.3.1 Primary Data

All interviews were held with the Innovation unit's team members, resulting in seven conducted interviews. Even though there could be a concern regarding the low number of interviews, this number represents all members of the Innovation unit team except for our contact person as she was aware of the topic of the thesis. She would have been inclined to give impartial answers rather than her neutral opinion. After all seven interviews, repeated patterns in the interviewees' answers could be observed, suggesting that a degree of empirical saturation was reached. With that said, a true picture of the situation within the unit was achievable.

3.3.2. Selection of interviewees

The selection of interviewees aimed to represent a typical project team in terms of roles, and was constructed in a way to minimise potential individual biases and give different views on the same issue (Morris, 2015). To accomplish this, we created the following selection criteria:

  i.   The interviewee has to be a member of the Innovation unit.
 ii.   The interviewee has to be involved in at least one project owned by the Innovation unit.
iii.   In total, all roles of a project team have to be represented amongst the interviewees.

By doing so, we assured that:

  i.   The methods and working processes described by the interviewees were specific for the Innovation unit team.
 ii.   By participating in a project, the interviewee was able to share his or her own experiences.
iii.   By interviewing a whole project team in terms of roles, appropriate empirical data could be extracted while all potential views were covered.

In total, all roles interviewed within the team were (i) Business Developer, (ii) Service Designer, (iii) Head of Innovation and (iv) Chief Development Officer. The first two mentioned roles were chosen because of their continuous participation in project teams and their contribution of different perspectives within the team. Moreover, the Head of Innovation was chosen because she leads the entire team, being therefore responsible and involved in all projects within the unit, and is also the link to the management team. The role contributes not only with a helicopter perspective but also with how the unit communicates with higher levels. Lastly, the Chief Development Officer was chosen due its ultimate responsibility for the Innovation unit in the management team. The role contributes to understanding the relationship between the Innovation unit team and top management.

In addition, we attempted to interview two employees in the same role, participating in different projects. This was done to ensure the consequences described were not related to a specific project or project team, but rather capture the perspective of the Innovation unit team as a whole. All interviewees were contacted with the help of our contact person by email, as shown in the table below.

Code name	Role
Maria	Service Designer
Ebba	Service Designer
Eva	Business Developer
Johanna	Business Developer
Amanda	Business Developer
Julia	Head of Innovation
Marcus	Chief Development Officer

Table 1. List of all interviewees.

3.4. Interview process

3.4.1 Conduction of interviews

The interviews were conducted using the predetermined interview guide (Appendix 2). While working on the construction of the interview guide, we identified two main themes relevant to the guide: project participation and diffusion of responsibility. Based on these, a questionnaire was created and later on reviewed by our contact person at Company X. Since an exploratory research design was applied, the questions were written to be as open as possible while still covering many interesting areas. We also wanted to evaluate the theory of diffusion of responsibility, so a few questions under the theme project participation were designed to achieve that. This theory was tested when interviewees talked about their project participation because a relationship with collective psychological ownership has previously been found (Pierce et al., 2009).

The interview technique applied was that one of us asked all the questions so the interviewee could feel comfortable and be focused, while the other observed, took notes and asked potential follow-up questions (Bryman et al, 2015). Both interviewers were present at all interviews, enabling us to later compare our viewpoints and perspectives in the analysis and decrease the risk of misunderstandings.

3.4.2 Collection of data

The interviews were conducted without the interviewees having previous knowledge of the theme of the study. This was done to prevent steering interviewees towards a particular answer and thereby avoiding a biased response (Bryman et al, 2015). The interviews began with introducing questions to ensure the interviewee felt comfortable and to establish a relationship. Interviewees were also asked to give examples of their statements to avoid misunderstandings. Furthermore, interviewees were allowed to take as much time as needed to answer a question, to make sure they were able to give as detailed responses as possible (Dicicco-Bloom et al., 2006). Because of that, each interview was booked for a time of 45 minutes.

We aimed to have interviews at the offices of Company X to make the interviewees more comfortable and have the same context as a starting point. Five out of the seven interviews were held in person, whilst the remaining two were held over Google Hangouts since interviewees were not physically present. Interviews were recorded to allow for transcription and transcribed on a continual basis. This was to determine whether the clarity of the questions was sufficient as well as determine whether changes had to be made to the questions, which was not required in this case. Interviews were carried out both in English and Swedish depending on the interviewees' mother tongue. Quotes were carefully translated to prevent misrepresenting the interviewees meaning.

3.4.3 Analysis of empirics

The empirics were analysed using grounded theory meaning that they were coded and categorised on a thematic basis (Corbin et al., 2008). This approach was taken because it offers a systematic method by which to study the multilateral dimensions of the phenomenon and contribute to relevant and plausible theory, which can be used to understand the contextual reality of collective psychological ownership (Rodwell, 1998). With that said, categories were constructed from the empirical data due to the studys' inductive approach. (Gioia et al, 2012; Bryman et al, 2015). This was done to both achieve flexibility and minimise the risk of missing out on relevant themes. Based on that, two main themes, and some sub-themes, were identified and used as our starting point in the analysis.

The main themes are (i) project experiences and (ii) diffusion of responsibility. The analysis was done through thorough and multiple reviews of the transcribed interviews to extract the most relevant empirics for each specific area. The analysis was firstly done by each of us individually and the individual analyses were then discussed collectively to ensure all important material was extracted. By doing so, we made sure the result came out as reliable and understandable as possible, covering all potential areas of discussion.

3.5 Discussion of method

We propose two primary criterias for assessing the study: trustworthiness and authenticity (Bryman et al, 2015). This approach was chosen due to the interpretivist paradigm this study embraces. Even though there are potential areas of improvement, we believe the trustworthiness and authenticity of this study is to be considered high. We have aimed to be not only transparent about all potential imperfections in this study but also about how the study was carried out.

3.5.1 Trustworthiness

The findings of this study call for careful interpretation. This study has narrowed its scope to be based on one unit thereby resulting in limitations in the sampling selection. The themes of this study may therefore not be transferable on a grander scale (Bryman et al, 2015). However, the core theory is difficult to generalise itself because of its social

constructionist nature. Since this study has an idiographic approach, we believe it can still bring up new learnings and insights that can be discovered, studied in and applicable to other contexts as well.

Furthermore, it is important to discuss the credibility of the study. In this sense, limiting the interviews to the only four roles represented in a project team may have excluded the experience of individuals which act as consultants for one project or act in other units of the organisation, thus affecting the study's credibility (Bryman et al, 2015). However, since the study was constructed to understand collective psychological ownership *within* the Innovation unit team, we believe the chosen roles give a fair representation of the social world studied to answer the research question. Respondent validation was also applied to enhance the study's credibility by allowing interviewees to review and comment on the quotes used as empirics in this study.

We also want to raise an awareness regarding the study's dependability and confirmability. Since two of the interviews were held through Google Hangouts, this can have affected the interviewees' answers. The fact that a video interview makes it harder to build a connection so the respondent can feel comfortable in sharing personal thoughts, was taken into account by us (Bryman et al, 2015). Furthermore, one of us has previous work experience at the company analysed, which could have affected the confirmability of this study. However, this bias was diminished by us applying reflexivity in the research process and therefore engaging in thorough discussion and analysis of the material, as well as being reviewed by other classmates and a supervisor to decrease the potential bias affecting the thesis. The other author of this thesis' unbiased perspective also played an important role in this context.

3.5.2 Authenticity
The method used of thematic analysis when analysing the empirics collected may also be questioned. The broad approach of the thematic analysis may have resulted in a lack of depth when analysing the different possible themes (Braun et al., 2006). However, we strived to achieve fairness in the study by involving employees from all different levels represented in a project team. This was done to ensure all perspectives were covered and get an authentic picture of the phenomenon studied.

3.6 Ethical considerations
This study has incorporated several different ethical considerations. First of all, the interview subjects have been anonymised for the purpose of the study. The interviewees were informed of this at the beginning of each interview to ensure their comfortability in speaking freely. Furthermore, each interview was only recorded after the interviewees agreed to it. Each interview began with informing the interviewees of their individual rights, emphasising that their participation in the interview was voluntary and they had the right to decline answering a question, as well as ensuring interview subjects that the information gathered would only be used for the purpose of this study. The interview subjects were also offered the opportunity to

review and comment on the quotes collected in the interviews to make sure there was no misunderstanding or misuse of the data collected. Employing respondent validation, as mentioned above, also ensures the trustworthiness of the individuals accounts (Bryman et al, 2015). After review by the respondents, no changes were requested to be made.

Second of all, both of us have signed a non-disclosure agreement with the company studied. This was done to ensure our accessibility to confidential information regarding projects. With this approach, we could get extensive answers and examples without potential information barriers.

4. Empirics

This section of the thesis aims to give a clear and coherent picture of the interviewees' answers and perspectives collected during the interviews. By quoting different employees from the Innovation unit team, we want the reader to gain a deeper understanding of the topic discussed. We have divided the empirics using themes found in the interview guide to facilitate the reader's comprehension in the analysis later.

4.1 Project experiences
In this part, the interviewees have explained their project experiences, which are categorised into two subdivisions: (i) successful project and (ii) unsuccessful projects.

4.1.1 Successful projects
When interviewees were asked to describe the characteristics of a successful project, a common aspect mentioned was the strong connection team members feel to a project. The respondents described this aspect as a result of the passion team members share, which leads to members often stepping out of their roles to ensure the success of the project. These feelings were mainly facilitated by the open discussion format in teams, resulting in input from all members working with the project as Julia mentions below:

"[...] When a project is created, there have been discussions going on and it is quite typical to see what it is like. Everyone is engaged [...]" -— Julia

"[...] I notice that everyone in the project goes outside their role. I think I have never heard someone saying "that is outside your role" or "what do you know about that" or something like that" -— Eva

This tendency of members to contribute and step out of their roles combined with their highly engaged nature was also mentioned by the interviewees as a factor resulting in great internal collaboration amongst team members. According to the interviewees, this also resulted in members being more effective when working in teams.

"I am personally more effective for delivering something in a team. I can usually have some sidetracks if I am working individually. In a team I feel like I am pushed to do things better"
-— Maria

The ability of the team members to collaborate internally was attributed by the interviewees to the shown capability of sharing knowledge within the team. Interviewees said they felt a strong sense of comfortability and easiness when seeking help and asking questions to different members or, if necessary, out-team members. This is mainly because of the open and safe environment the team has created amongst its members, as mentioned by Ebba:

"[...] I feel there is an environment where you can just say whatever you want [...]" -— Ebba

"[...] there are very good working groups, there are open discussions [högt i tak] and everyone's voice is heard"-— Eva

When mentioning this strong sense of openness within the team, respondents talked about good communication skills as a positive outcome. This was particularly emphasised in relation to involving relevant stakeholders at the right time which enables a more effective project process as decisions within the team can be made more quickly. The interviewees particularly mentioned a project in which Marcus, a member with authority, was directly involved and how it resulted in a productive project process. According to the interviewees, the productive project process was attributed to aspects such as the ability of the team to ask tough questions, both internally and externally, and specify what they should prioritise.

"I feel like the process has been very straightforward all the time and that might have to do with really good planning, not only from my side but in the team and the project manager, and the communication around the project like really making sure to involve relevant stakeholders when it is relevant to involve them and not wait with involving them or not involving them too soon, so that's the balance." -— Ebba

4.1.2 Unsuccessful projects

When interviewees were asked to talk about an unsuccessful project, the respondents elaborated on the effect of too much engagement from out-team members on the development of a project. Too much engagement in a project was identified as a factor which may harm its development as the involvement of a lot of out-team members can lead to projects becoming stuck in the starting phase for a long time. This was mentioned as a consequence of having to discuss the project with employees from other parts of the company that want to be involved in the project's startup phase, but are not directly part of the project team.

"Everyone is very curious about what people do, it is quite a lot of meetings, people like to be involved and it just means that you only gather more and more input from everyone and it can be difficult to filter what actually is important" -— Eva

The interviewees further developed on the negative aspects of engagement by discussing its effect on causing negative emotions amongst team members. According to the interviews, members often feel attached to the project. This was mentioned by interviewees as a cause for negative emotions such as frustration amongst team members when a project failed or was not continued.

"It is demoralising of course if you spend so much time and do a great job and good presentations, even prototypes etc, and then it will come back to "no or we wait a bit with this"". -— Marcus

Furthermore, interviewees mentioned how projects where there was a lack in clarity regarding who owns the project, were often seen as unsuccessful. Respondents highlighted projects in which it is unknown who has the final say within the team, leading to time wasted on discussions. Ebba identified how unsuccessful projects were characterised by a lack of knowledge in *"who will own the project if it is going to happen"*. This lack of clarity was mentioned as a contributor to confusion within the team.

4.2 Diffusion of responsibility

    4.2.1 Accountability

        When asked about explaining this lack of clarity, many interviewees talked about this prevailing unclearness of who is responsible for the project. According to the respondents, this contributes to a level of confusion amongst team members resulting in projects lacking a clear direction. This lack of ownership within the team has further contributed to a not perceived feeling of failure when a project is unsuccessful. Respondents commented on how failure is not seen as something problematic. The interviewees rather highlighted how it is encouraged by higher levels to take the initiative and launch a project regardless of its outcome.

"I do not think anybody really feels responsible for the delivery and that does mean closing a project, I do not think people perceive it as a failure on someone's side and you should probably [...]" -– Eva

One aspect which was mentioned by the interviewees is the difficulties related to making someone responsible when the team does not own a part of the business itself, which was also identified as an obstacle to the setting of goals within the Innovation unit team. On the other hand, many respondents mentioned the role of underlying fear in the avoidance of taking on the responsibility that comes with goal measurements. This was mentioned as an effect of the current lack of measurement within the team, causing members to fear the uncertainty of what will happen if measurements would be introduced and the members do not reach their goal.

"We are not measured at all. I talk to Marcus a lot and say that we would like to have goals as much as possible and what we have realised is that it is difficult to set measurable goals on an innovation team because we do not own a part of the business." -– Julia

"I think there is a fear because I think if you introduce measurable KPIs then everyone will also wonder, what happens if you don't reach your goals?" -– Eva

    4.2.2 Decision making

        Many interviewees also described the lack of clarity as a contributor to it being unclear what kind of decision the project team can make and when an authority needs to be

involved. According to various interviewees, it is very unclear who has the authority and capacity to make decisions and when. Marcus further mentioned how the decision maker in a project varies from project to project when *"it shouldn't differ"*. This can lead to team decisions taking a long time to make, a factor respondents identified as resulting in unsuccessful projects. Furthermore, interviewees mentioned how not knowing *"who is responsible for making big decisions and when"* leads to decisions being made collectively rather than by one member.

"I cannot answer it [who takes decisions in a project] actually, which is a small problem in itself. I would say that formally it is a more collective decision [...]" -– Julia

When the interviewees were asked why they believed there is a lack of clarity about who can make decisions they indicated different reasons. Firstly, a common factor mentioned by interviewees was the tendency to view not making a decision as the safest option. One aspect of this was mentioned where a respondent discussed how teams enjoy the idea of having a big mandate and clearer decision making processes in theory, but in reality they do not want to take on the responsibility which comes with it.

"I would say that in an organisation that lacks frameworks and processes, it often becomes the safest thing to never make a decision because as long as it is like the group or someone else, there is no one to blame. [...] Sometimes it has been sent very high up to the management because it has been like 'no we have to ask someone on the board or we have to ask the CEO', because it is where people dare to make decisions. " – Johanna

Secondly, interviewees discussed the role of the lack of clarity in not knowing at what level decisions can be made and the consequences they entail. According to the respondents, making decisions may have important consequences in the development pipeline which forces decisions to be made by an authority at a higher level rather than by the project team. Marcus developed on this by stating smaller decisions can be made within the team but strategic decisions should always be made at a higher level.

"Sometimes it gets so hard that it is difficult to make a decision because it has quite a lot of consequences… unfortunately we have to say that we are a tech company, everything we do will have consequences in our development pipeline" – Marcus

4.2.3 Role of authority

During the interviews, another topic some interviewees talked about was how authority, such as the management team, impacts the project team. According to the respondents, there is a tendency of authority to deem everything as very interesting and thereby create a sense amongst the Innovation unit team that they have the support of authority to see through a project. This can result in the team having worked on projects

which later on are not seen as a priority amongst authority. Marcus suggested that the lack of long-term strategic goals on a higher level is a contributor to this:

" [...] all projects are not completed and many times when this happens it is an unclear client and it is not clear what will be of the project. Sometimes the management team is not clear with what they want either. There is nothing wrong with the projects as such, but more so that there were no strategic long-term goals in the management team." - Marcus

5. Analysis

In this section, we will analyse and determine what consequences collective psychological ownership has within the Innovation unit team. The analysis is structured to show both positive and negative consequences, but places a greater weight on the negative consequences due to the explained research gap.

5.1 Consequences of collective psychological ownership
5.1.1 Benefits of collective psychological ownership

There is an agreement amongst interviewees that a successful project is one everyone is passionate about and consists of a strong internal engagement. This can be seen as an expression for a high degree of a shared mental model amongst the team, an attribute of collective psychological ownership, as mentioned by Druskat (2002). A strong feeling of "ours" amongst team members leads to a highly committed team resulting in a higher investment of time and energy in maintaining and improving a project (Verkuyten, 2017). The engagement of team members is facilitated through the safe, open and collaborative nature of the team setting. This is illustrated by interviewees mentioning the ability of members to speak freely and ask questions as aided by the open discussion format. These aspects show a presence of psychological safety within the team, as Pierce et al. (2009) suggest that team members propel to invest more of their collective selves into the project when this degree of psychological safety is experienced. Verkuyten (2017) further suggests that this commitment to the team and project results in binding members together and enabling better internal collaboration. This comes as a result of individual feelings of ownership becoming shared with others and a collective belief that much more can be achieved is developed (Pierce et al., 2009), explaining why we suggest the Innovation unit team members see themselves as being more effective when working in teams.

The ability of the team to engage in effective internal collaboration is further emphasised through the ease with which knowledge is shared within the team (Scholten et al., 2007). The safe and open environment enables knowledge to be shared easily and aids effective communication amongst members. These can be seen as aspects of group learning in which members engage in proactive behaviour due to a shared sense of ownership (Pierce et al., 2009). In addition, interviewees commented on how this good communication impacted their projects for the better. They all mention the ability to specify the project's goal and expectations, naming knowing who to involve and when as a crucial point. This aspect can be linked to Thompson's (1967) acknowledgement of the importance of communication amongst team members. According to theory, the sense of shared goal within the team can be enhanced by good communication skills, which signals a strong relationship between collective psychological ownership and better team communication. To conclude, collective psychological ownership leads to positive consequences such as a higher degree of internal engagement. However, there are also negative aspects related to these.

5.1.2 Drawbacks of collective psychological ownership

When interviewees were asked to describe unsuccessful projects, many of them shared how too much engagement and curiosity have rather sabotaged the development of projects. But since the same mentioned engagement and commitment were seen as something beneficial when asked about successful projects, it is of relevance to analyse why this has now been framed as something problematic instead. This shift of opinion can be explained by the paradox of the "double-edged sword" psychological ownership entails (Cocieru et al, 2019). This means that factors, such as engagement, can have positive effects but also become destructive and be seen as a threat within the team. The benefits emerged from collective psychological ownership within a team seem to turn into a drawback once the benefits have escalated to involve out-team members. Based on that, we argue that collective psychological ownership consists of similar negative consequences which theory attributes to psychological ownership.

Moreover, interviewees mentioned how negative emotions amongst team members, such as frustration, are developed by this excessive engagement from out-team members. Cocieru et al. (2019) argue that when an employee feels psychological ownership towards a project, and external stakeholders impose changes on that project, it is likely for the employee to experience negative emotions. This can explain why other stakeholder's excessive engagement evokes the project team's sense of control and possession that comes with collective psychological ownership. Brown et al.'s theory of territoriality (2013) might shed a light on this issue. The interviewees' complaints show how they view their projects as their exclusive territory, that has now been intruded by others, thus resulting in defensive behaviours and frustration within the team.

Another central aspect found was how the lack of a clear leader figure who owns the project has impacted projects negatively. Many interviewees mentioned how lacking a figure with the final say leads to unclarity and time wasted on long drawn discussions. This ambiguity and unclearness seem to play an important role and can be linked to what Pierce (2009) calls for diffusion of responsibility. Because of the theory's multilateral dimensions, it is highly important and relevant to analyse it by itself.

The previous research does not, as mentioned before, cover a lot of potential drawbacks related to collective psychological ownership. However, the analysis shows how theory can be complemented by empiricism, suggesting a more prescriptive approach to collective psychological ownership as a whole. In conclusion, collective psychological ownership has a double-edged sword paradox when out-team members are involved, resulting in a stronger sense of territoriality and a diffusion of responsibility.

5.2 Diffusion of responsibility

Diffusion of responsibility is a key aspect to the negative consequences of the presence of collective psychological ownership. In accordance with the literature, the analysis has been broken down into two relevant areas to enhance the understanding of the diffusion of responsibility: Accountability and Decision making.

5.2.1 Accountability

The prominent lack of ownership of a project within the team is often referred to as confusing amongst team members. This confusion can be seen as a trigger for the negative consequences of collective psychological ownership perceived by the team members, since no one knows who can be held accountable. Interviewees highlighted for instance how no one feels responsible for the delivery of a project. O'Connor (1997) discusses how a lack of a feeling of responsibility leads to an inability to be held accountable. Since members do not feel responsible and can not be held accountable, an unsuccessful project is not seen as a failure or problematic. This lacking feeling of responsibility further contributes to confusion amongst the team and in projects lacking a clear direction, showing how a lack of accountability can hinder the development of a successful project.

The literature further mentions how a lack of external consequences from out-team members might affect the team's commitment and responsibility towards something (Rutledge et al., 1994). The respondents highlight how there is a lack of external consequences from stakeholders such as the management team. This can for instance be explained by the lack of measurement metrics on the Innovation unit team. When a team is not measured, it becomes a challenge to provide explicit feedback and thereby create a feeling of negative external consequences within the team. This will in turn lead to the team not seeing a need for improvement and may therefore hinder the development of successful team processes. Furthermore, Wallach (1963) discusses how a team will develop a strong feeling of responsibility if the members feel they stand to gain or lose something from its consequences. Making members collectively accountable for their shared outcomes will result in the diffusion of responsibility (O'Connor et al., 1997) and further emphasises the lack of accountability within the Innovation unit team.

However, interviewee responses highlight how this lack of accountability and responsibility is fostered by higher levels in the organisation. It is mentioned several times that there is no way to measure the Innovation unit in part because it does not own a specific part of the business. The reason for this may be twofold. The first one is a fear that an introduction of measurement metrics might rather harm the prevailing team dynamics which may be seen as the benefits of collective psychological ownership. By introducing measurement metrics it may prevent the employees from fully committing to projects out of fear to be held responsible. The non-existence of external consequences currently has led to a development of fear of facing consequences, leading to a lack of the assumption of responsibility amongst team members. The second reason is the perceived lack of clarity within the Innovation unit

team when it comes to decision making. In summary, a negative consequence of collective psychological ownership within teams is thereby the occurrence of diffusion of responsibility as the team is not held accountable.

5.2.2 Decision Making

Research on decision-making in teams has highlighted the need for structure and visibility when making decisions (Brunsson, 1990). The interviewees highlighted the lack of clarity when knowing who has the authority to make what decisions and how it differs from project to project. An effect of this is that the project manager often just facilitates a discussion amongst members but is not the final decision maker, resulting in decisions being made collectively. Making decisions as a collective unit allows individual members to avoid responsibility through a lack of visibility of who is the final decision maker. This prevents members from risking that consequences be projected onto them individually (Whyte, 1991). This is strongly connected to the aforementioned lack of accountability in the Innovation unit team. The presence of collective psychological ownership encourages a collaborative decision-making process and the engagement of multiple team members. However, the encouragement of collaborative decision-making processes reduces the teams decision-making abilities as there is a lack of clarity surrounding who has the power to make decisions within the team, resulting in longer and ineffective discussions.

This mentioned lack of clarity can be further linked to the respondents answers regarding the role of authority. Research has found a link between a lack of decision making processes and less effective decision making in teams (Dean et al., 1996). Respondents mentioned that a project is more successful when an authority figure is involved as decisions can be made much more quickly. This highlights the underlying tendencies of teams to evade responsibility by laying the responsibility on teams at a higher level to make a decision. By continuously evading responsibility the team will never be able to act as an independent unit, creating a negative cycle in which diffusion of responsibility is maintained by the team itself. This has been discussed by Brunsson (1990) and can be seen as a way for individuals to easily escape being held accountable as authority often gives rise to responsibility. Furthermore, interviewees mentioned how authority such as the management team in some cases initially encourage the beginnings of a project and decision making within the Innovation unit team, but later on reject the projects. This can contribute to the perceived lack of clarity when making decisions and create a sense of diffusion of responsibility. Therefore, authority may inadvertently contribute to the ineffective decision making processes present in project teams.

To conclude, a negative consequence of collective psychological ownership within teams is the presence of a lack of clarity regarding decision-makers, resulting in collective decision-making within teams and an aversion to being held accountable. Authority further contributes to ineffective decision-making processes through creating a sense of diffusion of responsibility within the team. These effects confirm the negative consequences of the main

mechanism of decision-making, being how a lack of visibility can lead to a diffusion of responsibility.

6. Conclusion & Discussion

This study has investigated the consequences of collective psychological ownership within teams at growth companies. More specifically, the phenomenon has been studied within the Innovation unit team at Company X. We have analysed the empirics collected through qualitative research in combination with Pierce et al.'s theory (2009) of collective psychological ownership to create a deeper understanding, cover all potential consequences of the theory, and answer the following research question:

What consequences does collective psychological ownership have within teams at growth companies?

6.1 Answer to the research question

In the previous section, all four analyses collectively build up the complete answer to this study. In summary, the consequences found can be divided in two categories (i) benefits of collective psychological ownership and (ii) drawbacks of collective psychological ownership.

6.1.1 Benefits of collective psychological ownership

Collective psychological ownership consists of different team benefits, as already known in previous research. We also found that collective psychological ownership contributes to a higher degree of internal engagement and commitment within a team, which is a main effect of the shared mental model of "ours" established in an open and safe team environment. This strong sense of commitment also leads to better internal collaboration and group learnings within the team, where knowledge sharing is prominent amongst team members. These benefits are facilitated due to enhanced communication skills within the team, showing the correlation between collective psychological ownership and good team communication as a benefit. However, these benefits have a double-edged nature.

6.1.2 Drawbacks of collective psychological ownership

We found that collective psychological ownership consists of similar negative consequences as psychological ownership. This means that collective psychological ownership also has a double-edged sword paradox implying that its potential benefits can be turned into drawbacks when out-team members are involved. Furthermore, we found that collective psychological ownership results in a stronger sense of territoriality and a diffusion of responsibility, as suggested by other researchers.

We further found that this diffusion of responsibility within the team can be linked to a lack of accountability and ineffective decision-making processes. The first one is emphasised by the environment created where failure is not seen as problematic and there is a lack of external consequences for the team. The latter one is emphasised by the lack of clarity of

decision makers where it is unclear who can make decisions and thus be accountable for those.

6.2 Discussion of the studys' outcome
6.2.1 Study's contribution

The newness of Pierce et al.'s (2009) original paper entails a lack of previous research regarding what negative consequences collective psychological ownership has, making a comparison to previous research difficult. This study has aimed to enhance the knowledge regarding the phenomenon of collective psychological ownership by applying the theory to a study object as suggested by Cocieru et al. (2019). The study has found positive aspects of collective psychological ownership such as a higher degree of engagement and commitment within a team, aspects which have also been discussed by Verkuyten (2017) and Druskat (2002). However, it is of relevance to discuss to what extent these positive consequences of collective psychological ownership are to be seen as positive. According to us, the positive outcomes of this phenomenon highlighted by other researchers can be questioned, put in contrast to, and even be linked to its negative consequences. Our study has found that the negative consequences of psychological ownership and collective psychological ownership share similar characteristics. In particular, an interesting finding of this study is the double-edged nature of collective psychological ownership in which benefits can become drawbacks largely dependent on the presence of external factors. This paradox is the same acknowledged and discussed by Cocieru et al. (2019) as an important aspect of psychological ownership's consequences.

Another distinct aspect of this study is the clear link shown between collective psychological ownership, diffusion of responsibility and decision-making. Researchers, such as Pierce et al. (2009), Kurstedt et al. (1991) and Dean et al. (1996), have previously analysed and stressed the importance of the theories in separate contexts, but have never linked all concepts in one study. This study has surprisingly found the role of clear decision making processes in enabling the diffusion of responsibility which arises in the presence of collective psychological ownership. Furthermore, the results of this study are in line with previous research discussing the consequences of psychological ownership and diffusion of responsibility, such as possessive behaviour that is linked to territoriality by Brown et al. (2013). Consequently it can be determined that the study has contributed to research by enhancing the understanding of the relationships between these concepts.

By understanding the consequences of collective psychological ownership within teams, teams can enhance their ability in identifying what aspects may impede the feeling of commitment necessary for the successful development of projects. By identifying these aspects, teams can in turn increase their awareness and knowledge regarding the backside of collective psychological ownership, and ultimately improve their internal dynamics. This knowledge can then be utilised in the creation of successful team processes, such as effective

decision making processes. This study has thereby added to the previous research by analysing the effects of collective psychological ownership in practice.

6.3 Implications of the study

Our findings regarding collective psychological ownership's consequences contribute to the explanation of why some organisations have not implemented flat team structures, and thereby collective psychological ownership, as a way to enhance employee commitment. As with most theories, collective psychological ownership has a lot of benefits, yet an organisation should also be aware of the negative consequences that come with flat team structures and collective psychological ownership, especially in growth companies. Because of that, organisations, such as Company X, might want to recalibrate its usage and weigh the phenomenon's benefits versus its drawbacks. On the other hand, since some consequences of the phenomenon are now known, organisations might be better equipped to counteract these flaws within teams and continue to take advantage of collective psychological ownership.

Furthermore, during our attempt to decrease the gap in the theory studied, the study simultaneously contributed to shedding a light on another aspect of this area within management. We argue that this study shows the importance of seeing the area as a non-static research area, where empirics can complement theory. Collective psychological ownership is an example of a theory that can be enhanced by a prescriptive approach. Even though Pierce et al. (2009) tried to investigate the theory's consequences, this study shows how additional consequences can be found with the help of other theories in combination with empirical data. Since it is complex to predict human behaviour, even in teams, we want to accentuate the importance of the contribution of empirical data in the management literature.

6.3.1 Future research

We decided to have an idiographic approach because of the theory's social constructionist nature. However, we suggest that a similar study may be applied to a different team in other contexts or settings such as a company in a different industry to support, further validate and increase the trustworthiness of the findings discovered. We believe additional consequences, and especially negative ones, can be found in other contexts with different external factors. In addition, future studies can now establish a correlation between collective psychological ownership's negative consequences and its contribution to flat team structures' own negative outcomes.

Furthermore, it would also be relevant to investigate how and whether the size of the team studied might impact the implications found, as the negative consequences found in this study can be enhanced or diminished in bigger or smaller teams. A complement to this study is also to investigate how the consequences found might be affected by the level in which the team is located in the organisation. A study focusing on authorities at higher levels might contribute with new insights and perspectives to this study.

6.3.2 Limitations of the result

Our interpretivist approach to the study may present limitations to the presentation of the empirical material. This is because the presented material reflects frequently mentioned aspects by the interviewees, but may not necessarily always be the most relevant consequences of collective psychological ownership. As all interviewees are currently employed at Company X this may also have resulted in interviewees choosing to leave out certain information, and a lack of hindsight. Furthermore, in our theoretical framework we chose theories which were relevant and would add most value to this study. However, we acknowledge that there are other theories which could have brought new aspects to the research question and enhanced the understanding of the studied phenomenon.

The study has further assumed that flat organisations create team structures in which collective psychological ownership arises. This may be seen as a generalisation and may not always be the case in practice, as in some organisations collective psychological ownership may not arise from the implementation of flat team structures. Furthermore, this study has focused on the Innovation unit team at Company X which may neglect the experience of other units at the same company.

This study does not take a stand on whether the consequences found are permanent over time. The study focused on the negative consequences of the phenomenon, and therefore the positive aspects have only been used to be put in contrast to the negative consequences of collective psychological ownership. This was done to highlight aspects of collective psychological ownership such as the duality of its consequences.

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Appendix 1 - Role descriptions

Term	Definition
Business Developer	A Business Developer is responsible for driving projects and initiatives within a broad range of areas on both a global and local level - mainly related to the consumer and apps/services. A Business Developer, together with the product or business owners and in close cooperation with colleagues from relevant parts of the organisation, is responsible for the whole project lifecycle. From setting the project plan and securing resources, through driving the project in line with budget and time-plan and reporting the progress to the stakeholders to closing the project and handing it over to the line organisation.
Service designer	A Service Designer's main responsibility is to drive user-centered design thinking within the Innovation unit: user and design research, concept development, user-testing and product development. They have to ensure that the customer focus is part of the company's DNA in everything that they do. A Service Designer is also involved in investigations and projects covering the whole customer journey from awareness to exit, and hopefully returning.
Head of Innovation	The Head of Innovation is responsible for the entire Innovation unit. The responsibility includes managing all Business Developers, Service Designers and all projects owned by the unit. This role is also responsible for planning all future projects. The Head of Innovation is the link between the management team and the Innovation unit, and has to continuously update the management team about the unit's progress.
Chief Development Officer	The Chief Development Officer is part of the management team and is responsible for both the Innovation unit and the Technology unit.

Appendix 2 - Interview guide

General questions

Ethical aspects
1. Your participation in this study is voluntary.
2. This study, a bachelor thesis, will anonymise your name and participation and will not share your answers with other participants.
3. You, as a participant, can finish this interview anytime and don't have to explain yourself.
4. The interviewer has signed an NDA and appreciates full cooperation.
5. Do you allow us to record this interview for a transcription purpose?
6. Do you have any questions for us before we start?

Intro

Tell us more about yourself and your role at Company X

If he/she doesn't cover the following topics, ask:
1. How long have you been working at Company X? What's your title?
2. Can you tell us more about your role?
3. How many projects have you been part of? What kind of projects?

Project participation
4. Can you tell us about a project which you saw as a success? Why?
5. Can you tell us about a project which you saw as a failure? Why?
6. What factors contributed to the failure/success of those projects?
7. What was your role in the group? Leader etc?
    a. Are there any defined roles or do people assume any role necessary at a certain point in time?
8. Who has the final say when it comes to a project? Who has the ultimate responsibility for a project?
9. Do you perceive any problems with the structure of projects at your company?
    a. If so, what are the problems? If not, why not?
10. If you could change something, what would you change?
11. What happens if someone higher up requests a change to a project or wants to go in a different direction?
    a. How do you feel when this happens? Did you experience any changes in the group?

Accountability
12. If a project is not implemented, are there any consequences for the group?
    a. If so, what were they and how did it make you feel?
    b. If not, how did it make you feel?

Decision making
13. What does the decision making process within the group look like?