

Opening Forum: Defining ownership

What is ownership?

Ownership is what you defend, what you fight for, and implies the ability to exploit. It can take several forms, for example, objective (being legally an owner) versus subjective (having the feeling of owning something; psychological ownership), individual (it is mine) versus collective (it is ours), etc. It is not binary but can be rather understood as a continuum (e.g., shares in corporations, debt). It can be a dynamic process, it comes and goes. It appears to vary across cultural contexts and demographic variables (e.g. gender, age). Ownership – and its associated rights and responsibilities – can be passed onto others.

Ownership over what? How does it emerge and what does it imply?

The objects of ownership don't need to be literally "ownable". People can experience psychological ownership over everything (tangible and intangible objects), even without the possibility of legal ownership. For example, intangible objects like brands or organizations can also be targets of ownership. This feeling can arise from investment of the self in an object, intimate knowledge of an object, or control over an object. In turn, it can result in a sense of responsibility and stewardship.

Closing Forum: The future of ownership research

A comprehensive summary of future research directions can be downloaded [HERE](#)

The closing forum summarized new questions that were raised during the workshop and highlighted directions for further research in the area.

Diversity in ownership

How do gender, age, cultural and generational differences in the experience of ownership matter?

What does ownership do for society?

- People have an innate sense of territoriality, independent of gender, age, culture etc., - at least that appears to be the current picture research paints.
- The degree to which ownership is important and might be evaluated or what it may psychologically arise for may vary across generations, religions, political ideologies,

personalities, lifestyles, cultures or social classes, e.g., the perception of territory and space across cultures, independent vs. interdependent construal, narcissist personalities, older vs. younger generations, minimalists and anti-consumptionists etc.. Our current understanding about individual but also cultural and social variations in ownership is still very limited.

- How ownership is learned and perceived may change with globalization and changes in how people live (e.g., family vs. singles) – there are many open questions around this.

Measurement of ownership

How can we measure psychological ownership (and nothing else) given the plethora of different definitions of the concept? How can it be distinguished from related constructs like emotional attachment or identification? Are single-item measures sufficient? Also, how can psychological ownership be experimentally manipulated? Are there visceral responses and reactions that we can measure?

The dynamics of ownership

How does ownership develop and change over time? When does the feeling of ownership towards something start? How to prevent oneself from feeling ownership over something? When does ownership kick in? Is the acquisition of ownership feelings gradual? What are the long-term consequences (from acquisition to disposal)? To what extent does ownership wear off over time? Is there a need for a new theory of ownership for intangible targets? A need for more within-subject designs?

Reducing ownership

In spite of extensive knowledge on how ownership is gained and developed, much less is known about factors that reduce ownership. What are the processes of losing psychological ownership over an object?

What does it mean if people give up ownership? How are feelings associated with ownership and possession managed when ownership is given up (what about hoarders, for example)? Is there a constant account of ownership substitutability?

Consequences of ownership

A lot is known about antecedents of psychological ownership but less is known about its more subtle consequences. What are other consequences of psychological ownership and why does the experience of ownership matter? How large are the effects of ownership? What about the impact of ownership (feelings) on endowment, visual responses, actions, memory, emotions such as jealousy, shame and pride, identity and self-image? We know some but there is still a lot of scope. Is psychological ownership really causal? Can we as some suggest really successfully disentangle loss aversion and ownership?

The dark side of ownership

Is there an optimal level of perceived ownership? Can there be too much ownership? What are potential detrimental effects of feeling (too much) ownership for something? How much infringement of ownership is tolerable? Are there cases where low individual ownership is actually beneficial (e.g., innovation processes, the wisdom of the crowd)?

Collective ownership

Most research has focused on ownership from an individual-level perspective. But what about collective ownership? How does it differ from individual ownership in terms of definition, antecedents and consequences? Is “ours” many “mines”? How do we define ownership in a team, a company, a family, a city? What does the unit of analysis imply about its measurement? Is there a trade-off between individual and collective ownership? What about different ownership rights in groups?

The future of ownership

How will new forms of consumption (e.g., access-based consumption) influence the perception and feeling of ownership? How important is intangible ownership in light of new technological developments (e.g., virtual reality)? Is the feeling of ownership becoming more important than actual ownership? Is it the end of ownership as we know it?

Ownership will always be a part of people’s lives but its shape will change and forms as well as targets of ownership will become more diverse, e.g., with the advent of virtual and extended reality technology.