Recent research authored by Dr. Graham Brown and his colleague Dr. Markus Baer (Washington University) indicates that claiming ownership of an idea will smother creativity.

The researchers examined the effect of territoriality on creativity in their 2015 work, which was published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. It builds on the recognition that the creative process is improved when multiple individuals discuss an idea and their feedback is incorporated into the original proposal. To explore the issue further, Brown and Baer conducted two studies. The first looked at whether territorial marking stifled the feedback individuals were willing to provide, and the second explored the extent to which people’s view of themselves enhanced or diminished their willingness to accept and incorporate feedback. The results of the first study confirmed that claiming ownership or marking a proposal as “mine” has negative consequences. Feedback providers were reluctant to provide in-depth responses to an idea that was strongly marked. Ownership has a potential dual negative effect for the feedback seekers although the second study suggests that this effect is limited to feedback seekers with an independent view of themselves. Those with an interdependent view of themselves were much more willing to accept and incorporate creative feedback. By encouraging employees to use less “mine” and more “ours,” organizational leaders can develop a more innovative and collaborative organizational culture.

In future work, Brown intends to focus on infringement and its impact on an individual’s performance. His initial experiments reveal that performance diminishes if an individual takes over another’s territory.

As a researcher, professor and entrepreneur, Brown hopes to achieve a better understanding of the factors that lead to entrepreneurial success.

**Research Interests**

Brown’s research focuses on territoriality and psychological ownership. He applies these two threads to a variety of research topics including negotiation, creativity, and workplace conflict. His work has been published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology, Academy of Management Review, Organization Science, and Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* and featured in *Harvard Business Review* online. His teaching focus is in the areas of human resource management, leadership and negotiation and he applies these concepts to help others discover and use their passion to lead and create.

**HIGHLIGHTED RESEARCH:**


“By encouraging employees to use less “mine” and more “ours,” organizational leaders can develop a more innovative and collaborative organizational culture.”