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TERRITORIALITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

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Territorial feelings and behaviors are important, pervasive, and yet largely overlooked aspects of organizational life. Organizational members can and do become territorial over physical spaces, ideas, roles, relationships, and other potential possessions in organizations. We examine how territorial behaviors are used to construct, communicate, maintain, and restore territories in organizations. We then go on to discuss the organizational consequences of these behaviors, including their effects on organizational commitment, conflict, preoccupation, and individual isolation.

Life in organizations is fundamentally territorial. We make claims on and defend our control of a variety of organizational objects, spaces, roles, and relationships. Walk into almost any organization today, and you are immediately exposed to a wide variety of indications of employees' territoriality: artifacts, such as nameplates on doors and family photos on desks, and behaviors, such as resistance to the introduction of office cubicles and reluctance to let others join a key project. These are examples of employee attempts to establish, communicate, and control their relationships with elements of organizational life.

To discount territorial feelings and behaviors as petty, political, or self-serving is to overlook their importance to employees in contemporary work organizations. Studies of human territoriality have long suggested its potential significant effect on the performance and well-being of organizations and their members. Territoriality of physical space has been shown to engender a sense of belonging to social groups (Altman, 1975; Lewis, 1979), which in an organizational context may result in reduced turnover and increased performance. Studies also suggest that territoriality can be beneficial in clarifying and simplifying social interactions (Altman & Haythorn, 1967; Rosenblatt & Budd, 1975), which in organizations might reduce conflict and enhance effectiveness by more efficiently distributing key organizational resources.

Territoriality may, however, also have deleterious effects on organizations. Employees' preoccupation with communicating and maintaining proprietary claims, for instance, may diminish their focus on task performance and achievement of broader organizational goals. Moreover, in organizations where territoriality is entrenched and pervasive, members may—for fear of infringing on another's territory—be reluctant to venture into certain areas, take on new roles, or collaborate with particular colleagues.

Despite its prevalence and potential influence, there has been very little theoretical or empirical examination of territoriality in organizational life. The few studies of territoriality in organizations largely have been carried out within the tradition of environmental psychology (e.g., Wollman, Kelly, & Bordens, 1994) and, consequently, have not directly addressed the issues that most concern scholars of organizational behavior (Sundstrom & Altman, 1989). Within organizational research, scholars have only recently begun to pay significant attention to the nature and antecedents of psychological ownership in organizations (e.g., Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2001). We believe, however, that

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researchers need to further consider how organizational members communicate, maintain, defend, and restore the territories toward which they feel ownership.

In this article we examine territoriality in organizations and attempt to integrate and build on previous studies of territoriality in anthropology, geography, and social and environmental psychology, as well as organizational research that has addressed complementary issues. By introducing the concept of territoriality into organizational research, we hope to illuminate its significance and encourage additional study into this important phenomenon. We believe that the concept of territoriality has the potential to aid us in understanding many important behaviors that we observe in organizations. In particular, behavior that might appear to be irrational, dysfunctional, or unusual might largely be explained by territoriality. Examples of such behavior might include conflicts over seemingly trivial matters, such as who gets to announce the annual service award or why someone decorates his or her door and office with personal possessions. Although scholars can explain some of these behaviors in part by other concepts, we believe that, by ignoring the role of territoriality, researchers miss an important facet with unique explanatory power.

We divide the article into four major sections. We begin by developing a detailed definition of territoriality and discussing its relationship to psychological ownership. We then introduce four specific types of territorial behavior and highlight factors that influence these behaviors. Next, we examine some likely functional and dysfunctional organizational consequences of territoriality. We conclude by addressing some interesting future research directions, ways by which we might empirically study territoriality, and implications of territoriality for managerial practice.

THE CONCEPT OF TERRITORIALITY

The study of human territoriality has traditionally involved a focus on physical space (Hall, 1959). Researchers, originally observing and studying territoriality in animals, focused on the biological roots and evolutionary implications of territorial behavior (Brown, 1987; Sundstrom & Altman, 1974; Taylor, 1988). An important shift in territoriality research occurred in the mid 1980s, as scholars began to argue that human territoriality served to organize behavior in ways that reduced the necessity for violence, aggression, and overt domination (Edney, 1975). Thus, territoriality toward a physical space became associated with social and communal functioning, as well as individual behavior.

This research on human territoriality has produced a variety of definitions of the concept (see Brown, 1987, for a review), which vary particularly in their emphasis on either (1) attachment to and organization of territories (Altman, 1975; Sack, 1983) or (2) the occupation and defense of territories (Altman & Haythorn, 1967; Dyson-Hudson & Smith, 1978; Goffman, 1967). For our purposes, we use a definition of territoriality that integrates these two aspects and expands the potential focus of territoriality beyond physical space. We define territoriality as an individual's behavioral expression of his or her feelings of ownership toward a physical or social object. This definition includes behaviors for constructing, communicating, maintaining, and restoring territories around those objects in the organization toward which one feels proprietary attachment.

In unpacking our definition of territoriality, we begin by building on—and distinguishing it from—the concept of psychological ownership, which Pierce et al. define as "the feeling of possessiveness and of being psychologically tied to an object" (2001: 299). This concept parallels the idea of proprietary attachment from territoriality research, so we adopt psychological ownership here as a key psychological foundation of our model. Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) argue that psychological ownership has its "roots" in three fundamental human drives that provide the reasons for why individuals experience psychological ownership. First, psychological ownership fulfills the need for efficacy: individuals are motivated to be efficacious and competent and consequently desire to control their environments in ways that might facilitate this. Second, psychological ownership is rooted in the need for self-identity: through connections to organizational objects, one can communicate one's identity, as well as explore and reflect on one's own understanding of that identity. Finally, psychological ownership is rooted in the inherent need of people to have a place of their own (Duncan, 1981; Weil, 1952): a home, whether physical or metaphorical, can provide physical and psychologi-

cal security that can serve as a foundation for a variety of positive experiences and behaviors (Brown, Brown, & Perkins, 2004).

The concept of territoriality makes a powerful addition to research on psychological ownership by providing a means of exploring the social and behavioral dynamics that sometimes follow from employees' sense of psychological ownership. Psychological ownership refers to feelings of possessiveness and attachment toward an object. Territoriality, in contrast, refers to actions or behaviors that often emanate from psychological ownership for the purposes of constructing, communicating, maintaining, and restoring one's attachment to an object.

Whereas psychological ownership is a psychological state, territoriality is a social behavioral concept, which has at least two key aspects. First, territoriality involves social actions that flow from psychological ownership in a social context. There is no reason for territorial behavior if one has psychological ownership of objects that are not in a social realm. People feel attached to all sorts of objects in the world, but it is only those objects to which individuals feel a *proprietary* attachment that will lead to territorial behaviors. Territoriality is not simply about expressing some form of attachment to an object (e.g., "I *love* my office!"); rather, it is centrally concerned with establishing, communicating, and maintaining one's relationship with that object relative to others in the social environment (e.g., "This is *my* office and not yours!").

Second, territoriality reflects the social meanings of actions regarding claiming and protecting objects as they are negotiated in a given social context. It is only when one publicly claims and protects an object as his or her own in a social environment that it is transformed into a territory. Thus, territories are social constructions (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) that only come into being through the territorial behaviors of individuals. As with all social constructions, an object only exists as a territory to the extent that is reproduced in social interaction among relevant actors (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Fairclough, 1992); one cannot simply think a territory into existence.

We should stress the point that, unlike traditional studies of territoriality, we are not limiting our examination of territoriality to physical space or even physical objects. Consequently, our use of the term *object* is a very general one: territoriality can involve tangibles, such as physical space and possessions; intangibles, such as ideas, roles, and responsibilities; and social entities, such as people and groups. Indeed, organizational members can develop, maintain, and defend relationships with many aspects of organizational life. As Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) discuss, individuals can feel ownership toward their work (Beaglehole, 1932), their organization (Dirks, Cummings, & Pierce, 1996), the products they create (Das, 1993), their jobs (Peters & Austin, 1985), and even specific issues within their organization (Pratt & Dutton, 2000).

The final point we want to clarify with respect to the concept of territoriality is its relationship to power and politics in organizations. This relationship is a complex one, because these are closely related concepts but also clearly distinct from one another. The connection between them is based on their similar concern with the distribution and management of organizational resources. Power in organizations stems from the control of scarce, valuable resources and the ability to exploit that control through various strategies (Hickson, Hinings, Schneck, & Pennings, 1972; Pfeffer, 1981). Similarly, territoriality is concerned with the control of organizational resources; territories represent valued organizational objects over which members make proprietary claims (Esser, 1968, 1973). Moreover, one of the reasons individuals may be motivated to engage in territorial behaviors is to gain the influence and strategic advantage that control of some object may afford them in the organization. Consequently, the study of territoriality may provide valuable insights for our understanding of power and politics in organizations; it may, in particular, highlight the dynamics associated with political strategies that have so far been relatively ignored.

Territoriality is not, however, simply a subset of political behavior in organizations. Territoriality is the behavioral expression of psychological ownership, and, thus, the motivations for territorial behaviors are far more varied than simply the desire for influence and strategic advantage. The search for personal efficacy may be quite separate from the ability to influence others; moreover, the construction and expression of identity, as well as people's need for a sense of place, stimulate territorial behaviors that may be largely unconnected to patterns of power and influence in organizations.

Similarly, organizational politics often occur without involving the construction, negotiation, or defense of territories; members of organizations draw on a wide variety of strategies and tactics to influence each other, such as ingratiation, coercion, and rational persuasion (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980), that do not rely on or involve territorial behaviors. The distinctiveness of territoriality and power-oriented behavior can be illustrated by the relatively common occurrence of individuals who behave territorially over objects that are only subjectively or symbolically valuable. University students, for example, may extend significant effort to protect a particular library carrel or seat in the classroom as their own, and likewise experience a sense of emotional indignation or loss if that carrel or seat is used by another, simply because of a sense that it belongs to them, independent of any material or strategic value it may have over any other carrel or seat.

Thus, the concept of territoriality provides a useful complement to studies of power and politics in organizations. It can highlight and explain some forms of political behavior, while at the same time examining and explaining what is a distinct phenomenon.

TERRITORIAL BEHAVIORS

Territorial behaviors are used to construct, communicate, maintain, and restore territories. These behaviors fall into two main categories: marking and defending. In this section we clarify how psychological ownership is directly related to territorial behavior in general. We then introduce the specific territorial behaviors—marking and defending—and discuss potential moderators of the relationship between psychological ownership and these specific types of territorial behaviors. As we will explain, these specific types of territorial behaviors differ from one another in terms of their overt manifestations as well as the functions they serve.

Psychological Ownership As an Antecedent of Territorial Behavior

Prior research on territoriality regarding physical space reveals that the degree of proprietary attachment is directly related to the degree of territorial behavior (Altman, 1975; Barbey, 1982; Brown, 1987; Czikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Gifford, 1997; Knapp, 1978; Ley & Cybriwsky, 1974; Tuan, 1980). This relationship occurs for several reasons. The greater one's psychological attachment, the more it fulfills the basic needs of efficacy, self-identity, and having a place of one's own. The fulfillment of those needs means that the territory in question has stronger psychological value to the individual, motivating him or her to communicate it to others (through marking) and to protect and keep it (through defending) as his or her own. Relatedly, potential invasions of that particular territory are perceived as more potentially harmful, with infringement potentially threatening one's sense of self-efficacy, one's ability to express one's identity, and one's sense of security. Consequently, the more psychologically valued the territory, the more effort an individual will make to mark it, and the more energetically he or she will defend it (Taylor & Brooks, 1980).

> *Proposition 1: The stronger an individual's psychological ownership of an object, the greater the likelihood he or she will engage in territorial behaviors toward that object.*

The preceding discussion lays out the key antecedent of territorial behaviors. We now turn our attention to specific types of territorial behavior—marking and defending—and discuss several critical factors that moderate their occurrence in organizations.

Marking: Constructing and Communicating Territories

Marking refers to those territorial behaviors of organizational members that construct and communicate to others at work the members' proprietary attachment to particular organizational objects. Marking involves the social construction of objects as "territories," as organizational members negotiate to whom the territories belong, as well as the boundaries around them (Brown, 1987; Sommer & Becker, 1969), and it requires the skilled use of locally meaningful gestures or symbols to signal one's territory and its boundaries (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1967). Examples of markers include physical symbols, such as a nameplate on an individual's door, pictures of one's children on a computer screen, or a coat thrown onto a chair, and social markers, such as titles used by certain employees, social rituals

that convey belonging and access, or public pronouncements of one's idea to ensure everyone knows to whom it belongs.

Although there are numerous examples of territorial marking, we are not suggesting that all of the ways in which and occasions on which individuals might alter an organizational object are territorial. For example, some organizational members will alter organizational objects such as posters or brochures to ridicule the boss or the company itself, and although this is important symbolic behavior, it does not express feelings of ownership or mark an object as a personal territory.

Marking can be relatively permanent, establishing enduring boundaries and proprietary control of a territory for an indefinite period of time (Becker, 1991; Donald, 1994). Examples of this behavior might include hanging paintings in one's office or filing for a patent for one's invention. Marking is also done on a more ad hoc basis, when the need is temporary (Becker, 1991; Sundstrom, 1987). For example, an employee may claim a meeting room simply by leaving his or her file folders on the table, or an individual may mark his or her informal role on a committee by giving the role a nickname, such as "the skeptic." Ad hoc marking may also occur, such as when the boundaries or ongoing control of a territory is somewhat ambiguous (Brown, 1987); in an open plan office, for instance, employees might mark space around their cubicles by spreading out belongings or by using audible markers, such as music or their voice on the telephone (Ruback, Pape, & Doriot, 1989).

Organizational members tend to use a form of marking that reflects the basis of psychological ownership. This can communicate territoriality that is either identity oriented—for example, indicating personal aspects of oneself by displaying family pictures or diplomas—or control oriented—for example, regulating access to oneself by using a sign saying "Do Not Disturb" (Brown, 1987). Both control- and identity-oriented marking serve to socially construct an organizational object as a territory by clarifying to others what its boundaries are and to whom it is attached. However, as we will explain below, each form of marking is distinct.

Identity-oriented marking. The first major form of territorial marking involves marking an organizational object with symbols that reflect one's identity (BOSTI, 1981; Sundstrom, 1987). Specifically, identity-oriented marking or personalization is the deliberate decoration or modification of an environment by its occupants to reflect their identities (Sommer, 1974; Sundstrom & Sundstrom, 1986).

Identity-oriented marking serves the function of enabling individuals to both construct and express their identities to themselves and to others. With this form of marking, individuals can express a variety of facets of their identities, including their professions—for example, degrees and diplomas on the wall; their status—for example, long-service awards or titles after their names; or aspects of their personal lives—for example, children's art or travel photos adorning their desks (Wells, 2000).

The relationship between identity-oriented marking and the social identities of individuals is not unidirectional, however. At the same time that identity-oriented marking expresses identity, it also works to define and redefine the identities of the actors involved. Through the processes by which symbolic expressions of identity are produced, accepted, or rejected by others, and revised and refined, actors come to understand and make sense of their own identities (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Pratt, 2000; Weick, 1995). Thus, through the symbolic interaction associated with identity-oriented marking, situational and self-definitions emerge and may change (Ashforth, 1985; Reichers, 1987).

Moreover, the impression management literature (Asch, 1946; Schneider, Hastorf, & Ellsworth, 1979) would suggest that individuals are likely to engage in identity-oriented marking in ways that are specific to particular situations and social contexts. One's personalizations of an object may or may not communicate the same aspects of identity that would be communicated in other settings. Thus, personalizations are an important type of marking that allow a person to express his or her identity and foster a sense of belonging to the organization.

As with all forms of territoriality, we argue that the likelihood of identity-oriented marking is directly influenced by the degree of psychological ownership one has of the territory one is marking. We further argue that this main-effect relationship is moderated by at least one critical variable: the degree to which an individual relies on identity-oriented marking in order to be distinctive. Distinctiveness theory suggests that people define themselves in part by the features

of the self that distinguish them from others (McGuire, 1984; McGuire & McGuire, 1981; McGuire & Padawer-Singer, 1976). This perspective suggests that "the need to see oneself as unique is a potent and continuous force in our society" (Snyder & Fromkin, 1980: 3) and that being distinct is an essential "basis of a sense of I" (Erikson, 1959: 45). Successfully distinguishing oneself from others, therefore, maintains one's self-esteem (cf. Breakwell, 1993; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2000), whereas extreme similarity to others leads to the experience of negative affect (Fromkin, 1972).

For these reasons, people actively try to distinguish themselves from others. One of the important ways in which people at work can distinguish themselves from others is by the identity-oriented marking of their territories. We argue that those most motivated to express their distinctiveness through personalizations of their territories will be those who perceive they are otherwise less able, for a variety of reasons, to be distinct.

A number of factors in the workplace may increase the perceived similarity among employees and limit opportunities for self-expression and, thus, lead individuals to personalize their territories to express that distinctiveness. In a general sense, employees with higher-status positions tend to have fewer structural equivalents than those of lower status, so their position alone may help to create distinctiveness. Relatedly, job standardization may increase similarity among those in the same position and, consequently, limit the degree to which employees in standardized roles can differentiate themselves from others in the same role. Other homogenizing factors, such as identical cubicle spaces and enforced dress codes, also provide potential methods of standardization that may limit the expression of self and have significant deindividuation effects on some employees (Rafaeli & Pratt, 1993). Employees in environments where their similarity to others is enhanced and their opportunities to be distinctive are limited will be more likely to engage in identity-oriented marking with the objects over which they feel ownership.

> *Proposition 2: The relationship between psychological ownership and identity-oriented marking of a territory will be stronger to the extent that the individual believes he or she is otherwise unable to express his or her distinctiveness from others at work.*

Control-oriented marking. This second form of marking involves marking an organizational object with symbols that are not personalized but that communicate the boundaries of a territory and who has psychological ownership over it (Altman, 1975; Becker & Mayo, 1971; Smith, 1983). The function of control-oriented marking is to communicate to others that a territory has been claimed so as to discourage access, usage, and infringement attempts by others. Whereas identity-oriented marking involves marking an organizational object to express one's identity or self, control-oriented marking is used to control access or use of the object in question (Brown & Altman, 1981, 1983). Examples of control-oriented marking might include the manager who positions his desk in a shared office to differentiate between his proprietary space and that of others and the nurse who sticks a Post-it® note with her name on it on a shared terminal at the nurse's station.

As already stated under our first proposition, control-oriented marking will be influenced by the degree of psychological attachment. We believe, however, that this relationship will critically depend on the degree of ambiguity regarding the ownership and boundaries of the object in question. Control-oriented marking organizes and brings meaning to space, roles, and other objects that may be potential territories, so greater ambiguity will trigger higher levels of control-oriented marking.

Ambiguity will be greater when there is an absence of preexisting territory markers; when control-oriented markers do not already exist for objects to which individuals feel psychological ownership, those individuals will work to create them. For example, in traditional office space, physical walls demarcate private work areas, whereas in open-plan contexts, employees' energy will be more focused on control-oriented marking because the differences between private and public space are more ambiguous.

Ambiguity also may stem from organizational change. During an organizational restructuring, for instance, organizational members may find themselves working in new departments with new colleagues; consequently, traditionally established territories will likely be upset, and

even meaningless. At such times, organizational members are likely to engage in significant amounts of control-oriented marking as they try to reestablish shared understandings of territories in connection with particular roles, spaces, relationships, and objects. The impact of territorial ambiguity on control-oriented marking leads to our next proposition.

> *Proposition 3: The relationship between psychological ownership and control-oriented marking of a territory will be moderated by the ambiguity regarding the ownership of the object such that the more ambiguity there is, the stronger the relationship will be.*

Defending: Maintaining and Restoring Territory

Although marking demarcates territorial boundaries and indicates the relationship between a territory and an individual, the socially defined nature of these boundaries and attachments means they will sometimes be under conflict or subject to differing interpretations (Brown & Altman, 1981, 1983; Lyman & Scott, 1967; Wollman et al., 1994). Organizational members may disagree about who has ownership over what objects. In some cases organizational members may differ in their perceptions of the boundaries around territories; adjacent territories may have overlapping perceptual boundaries and, thus, create a zone of potential conflict. For example, some formal roles may be clearly delineated by organizational title, but when it comes to extrarole behaviors, several members may repeatedly vie for ownership.

Lyman and Scott (1967) call the act of encroaching on another person's territory or property an "infringement." For our purposes, we define infringements based on the perception of the person who is experiencing the infringement; in other words, if an organizational member feels his or her territory has been infringed upon by another, an infringement has occurred. Infringements have the potential to elicit territorial behaviors on the part of those experiencing the infringement, whereby they defend their territories in a variety of ways that serve to prevent or respond to infringements (Knapp, 1978). Fear of infringement and anger resulting from infringement lead to two basic types of territorial defenses: (1) anticipatory defenses, which occur before an infringement, and (2) reactionary defenses, which occur after an infringement. Although both are frequently used and generally increase with increasing psychological ownership, other factors will influence the implementation of each defense.

Anticipatory defenses. Anticipatory defenses are actions by organizational members that are noncommunicative in nature, taken prior to an infringement with the purpose of thwarting infringement actions taken by others (Dyson-Hudson & Smith, 1978; Edney, 1975, 1976; Knapp, 1978). Examples of anticipatory defenses might include a lock on a door to prevent illegitimate entry or use of the office contents, or an attentive receptionist who prevents access to a particular senior executive.

Control-oriented marking and anticipatory defenses are different in nature. Control-oriented marking is behavior that is a form of overt communication to others showing that the territory has already been claimed. Anticipatory defenses are those actions that are not communicative in nature but that prevent infringement when it is attempted. These two types of territorial behaviors also vary in their function. Control-oriented marking functions through persuading others *not to attempt* to gain access to the marked territory—that is, it discourages others from making attempts to infringe by communicating the boundaries and ownership of a territory. A "private" sign, for example, discourages others from attempting to enter that space; similarly, announcing one's ownership of an idea discourages others from trying to lay claim to the idea later on. In contrast, anticipatory defenses function to *thwart actual infringement*—that is, they stop people from being successful in their infringement attempts. Locking a door, for example, is a type of anticipatory defense, because it prevents someone from opening it. Thus, control-oriented marking depends on establishing visible, meaningful communication markers (e.g., a high-visibility sign or a large, conspicuous lock) that are overt and social in nature. Anticipatory defenses depend on establishing impermeable, resilient boundaries (e.g., a strong door or a large security guard with a gun) and, thus, are not communicated per se.

Given the distinctive nature of anticipatory defenses, one critical factor that will uniquely

moderate their occurrence is the belief and fear that marking by itself will be ineffective and, thus, that infringement attempts will be likely despite marking. This fear will be more likely in some social contexts than others. First, in some cases the boundaries of territories may be difficult to define and relatively hard to mark. In such situations organizational members may expect infringements to occur because others will not realize the boundaries or ownership of a territory. For example, a file on a shared computer network is hard to mark. However, it is relatively easy to stop others from accessing through the use of a password.

Second, some social contexts make marking difficult because the people in that context lack a shared set of symbols to meaningfully establish territorial boundaries. This might be the case when organizational members are new to one another, such as during a merger, or when organizational members are from highly diverse backgrounds.

Finally, high levels of attempted infringement might be anticipated when the potential costs of infringement are relatively low. Such a situation might occur when territories are exposed to transient populations (such as customers and temporary workers) over whom social or cultural sanctions may be relatively ineffective. Low costs of infringement might also occur when surveillance is difficult; many organizational objects cannot always be monitored, so covert infringement may occur despite clear marking. The effect of these conditions leads to our next proposition.

> *Proposition 4: The relationship between psychological ownership and anticipatory defenses will be stronger to the extent that the individual perceives a greater likelihood of infringement despite marking.*

Reactionary defenses. Despite organizational members' attempts to mark their territories and establish anticipatory defenses, infringements still occur. Reactionary defenses are actions by organizational members that are taken after and in reaction to an infringement attempt (Brown, 1987; Wollman et al., 1994). They function to provide an emotional expression of one's feelings toward the infringement, to undermine the infringement, and to restore the territory to the actor.

Researchers first observed reactionary defenses in animal territoriality, noting "fight or flight" responses to territorial infringement (Edney, 1974). Although organizational members are unlikely to respond to infringement with physical violence, there is a range of other commonplace reactionary defenses in organizations: informal reactions, such as glaring, expressing irritation, yelling and slamming doors, firing off protective e-mails, and seeking the support of coworkers, as well as more formal responses, such as lodging a complaint with superiors or writing a letter of protest.

Reactionary defenses may serve multiple purposes. First, they may provide an outlet for frustration or outrage. Indeed, individuals often experience significant negative emotions when their possessions are threatened or their space violated (Pierce et al., 2001). For example, feelings of anger from infringements may lead the territory holder to act irrationally and make poor decisions (Mikulincer, 1996; Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996; Richards & Gross, 1999). Aside from initial feelings of anger or fear, the grief over the loss of a territory can also be significant and can be exacerbated if people do not react (see Brown & Perkins, 1992, for a review). Suppressing these emotions (emotional regulation) may impair organizational performance (Brief & Weiss, 2002). Second, reactionary defenses may be intended to reclaim the infringed upon territory. Glaring, yelling, and complaining to a superior may reestablish territorial control. Finally, reactionary defenses may deter future infringements. Organizations might encourage the lodging of formal complaints, for instance, in order to establish a new norm of respect for organizational members' privacy or space.

As noted, psychological ownership will positively influence reactionary defenses when individuals perceive that an infringement has occurred. Infringements most likely evoke an immediate emotional response (Zajonc, 1984), followed by cognitive rationalizing. Given the nature and purpose of reactionary defenses, we posit that a critical moderator of this relationship will be the attributions one makes regarding the infringement. When faced with undesirable outcomes, such as infringed upon territory, individuals will search for explanations to enable them to assign responsibility and blame (Wong & Weiner, 1981). That assignment of responsibility will affect the emotional intensity of

these individuals' reactions (Frijda, 1988; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988) and their subsequent reactionary defenses. According to attribution theory, the assignment of responsibility is based on an analysis of the following factors: causality, control, foreseeability, and intentionality (Bell & Tetlock, 1989; Heider, 1958). At a minimum, an organizational member must believe that an infringement was caused by the other party (Heider, 1958). If the member perceives that it was due to a misunderstanding over proprietary ownership or his or her own misperception of boundaries, he or she will be less likely to blame the infringer.

Moreover, reactionary defenses will be more likely to the extent that the individual feels the infringer could have controlled or foreseen the infringement. Thus, when infringement involves territory that is poorly marked, or when the infringer was unable to interpret the symbols of territoriality, one might assume the infringer had no control or foreseeability regarding the infringement, and, thus, the reaction will be less strong. Therefore, an organizational newcomer is less likely to be blamed for taking over a role that belongs to someone else than an established employee, who obviously knows better. Similarly, an apparently unused meeting room that is taken over by an infringer is less likely to lead to a reactionary defense by its rightful owner than when a room is clearly occupied with the owner's belongings.

Finally, one of the most important factors affecting this attribution process is perceived intentionality (Bell & Tetlock, 1989; Heider, 1958)—in this case, the degree to which the infringement is perceived as intentionally harmful. Even if an infringement is perceived as purposeful and under the control of the infringer, a reactionary defense will only be likely when the organizational member perceives it as intendedly malicious, rather than helpful. Such attributions are often dependent on the outcome; individuals are more likely to attribute malice to the extent that the outcome is negative (Harvey, Ickes, & Kidd, 1981; Heider, 1958). An extreme case of a purposeful, helpful infringement would be breaking down a door in a fire or medical emergency. Organizational life, however, is full of more mundane helpful infringements, such as when organizational members barge into colleagues' offices to notify them of some development or the arrival of a client, or when a well-meaning coworker interjects into a private conversation.

Proposition 5: The relationship between psychological ownership and reactionary defenses will be moderated by an individual's attributions about the infringement such that the relationship will be stronger to the degree that the organizational member holds the infringer responsible for the infringement.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSEQUENCES OF TERRITORIALITY

We now turn our attention to examining the consequences of territorial behaviors for organizations. In studies of human territoriality outside of organizations, researchers have found it has a variety of important individual and collective effects (Brown, 1987; Malmberg, 1980). Since a thorough exploration of all the consequences of territoriality for organizations is beyond the scope of this paper, we follow traditional research on territoriality in highlighting two areas in which territoriality has important impacts: (1) the relationship between an individual and the social unit (the organization, in our case) and (2) the relationship among members of a social unit.

Drawing on traditional research, as well as contemporary organizational behavior scholarship, we argue that territoriality can have significant positive consequences for organizations by increasing the commitment of members to the organization and by reducing conflict among organizational members. Although traditional human territoriality research has tended to emphasize only its positive consequences, we believe territoriality can also have negative consequences for organizations. Thus, we also discuss the potential for territorial behaviors, particularly when engaged in excessively, to lead to ego-centered preoccupation, where individuals neglect their relationship to the organization, and to social fragmentation, where organizational members isolate themselves from one another.

Organizational Commitment

We argue that an important positive consequence of territorial behavior for organizations

is its influence on the organizational commitment of individual members who engage in such behavior. For the organization, individual members who are more committed produce higher levels of job performance (Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, & Jackson, 1989; Steers, 1977), are more likely to engage in organizational citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988), and have lower rates of absenteeism (Mathieu & Kohler, 1990) and turnover (Williams & Hazer, 1986).

We argue there are three ways in which territorial behavior will increase the organizational commitment of members who engage in it. First, identity-oriented marking—or personalization—increases the degree to which members identify with and attach to those organizational objects they mark (Brown, 1987). To the extent they perceive those objects as organizational, their attachment is also likely to extend beyond the immediate territory to the organization as a whole (Wells, 2000). Relatedly, social identity research suggests that people seek to accentuate their own distinctiveness in interpersonal contexts (Tajfel & Turner, 1985), and, thus, individuals are drawn to organizations in which they can express themselves, rather than to those in which they need to suppress or hide their self-concepts (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Therefore, individuals are more likely to identify with their organization if they feel they can also express characteristics they value about themselves through identity-oriented marking (Kunda, 1992).

Second, territorial behaviors, including both marking and defending, increase organizational commitment by creating and maintaining territories that root individuals more firmly in the organization. The development of territories not only defines the boundaries around organizational objects but establishes their meaning as well—their value and their ownership. These territories root the person in the organization more than if they did not have these objects of belonging (Vinsel, Brown, Altman, & Foss, 1980). Research in psychological ownership suggests that one dimension of ownership—one need that is satisfied—is the need to have a place of one's own. Behaviors, such as marking and defending, that increase the sense one has a place of one's own will increase the rootedness and sense of belonging an individual member has with the organization. The increasing strength of the defenses and markings deepens this embeddedness.

Finally, both marking and defending territories often require significant personal investments of time and energy, which research has shown increases the organizational commitment of individuals making such investments (Becker, 1960; Meyer & Allan, 1984; Wallace, 1997). Moreover, marking and defending often involve investments that are made publicly and voluntarily—factors that have long been understood to increase commitment levels (Salancik, 1977).

With all three of these ways in which territoriality increases commitment, we are focusing on the territorial behaviors themselves, rather than the reactions they might engender. While others' reactions to these behaviors might also affect commitment levels (either positively or negatively, depending on the reaction), our argument is that, in the first instance, simply engaging in territorial behaviors will increase the commitment of those doing so. Thus, these dynamics lead to our next proposition.

> *Proposition 6: Engagement in territorial behavior will increase an individual's commitment to the organization.*

Conflict

The second positive organizational consequence of territoriality is its potential effect on conflict. Beginning with studies of animal populations, researchers have shown the functional potential for territoriality to reduce conflict (Edney, 1974; Freedman, 1979). We argue that, to the degree territorial marking behavior involves or creates a socially agreed upon territory, it is likely to reduce "process conflict" (Jehn, 1997; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999) among organizational members. Process conflict involves organizational members' clashing over the allocation of responsibilities, relationships, and resources. Eliminating such process conflict has been shown to increase morale (Jehn, 1992), organizational effectiveness (Jehn et al., 1999), and productivity (Jehn, 1997). The relationship between territorial behaviors and conflict may appear somewhat paradoxical: territorial behaviors may emerge in response to conflict over organizational objects, and may even increase that conflict in the short run (and, hence, may be

positively associated with conflict at a point in time), but we argue that, over time, territorial behaviors will reduce process conflict as organizational members establish and maintain their own territories.

Territorial marking, for instance, allows individuals to avoid conflict because they are able to make the boundaries and proprietary nature of territories clear to others (Becker & Mayo, 1971; Brown, 1987). Although territorial marking may likely occur under conditions that promote conflict (where there are limited valuable resources available to organizational members), the marking itself will, we argue, lessen the likelihood of conflict. As in the animal kingdom, organizational members who clearly perceive a territory as belonging to someone else will often respect that boundary and search for resources or space elsewhere, in order to avoid the practical and emotional costs of conflict. Thus, territorial behaviors can create a shared social map that will subsequently lessen the degree of process conflict.

Similarly, anticipatory defenses may reduce the level of conflict in organizations by preventing organizational members from infringing (accidentally or intentionally) on others' territories. We argue that anticipatory defenses may reduce levels of conflict because they enhance the ability of organizational members to control access to themselves and their belongings without engaging in direct confrontation with others. Locks on doors, policies restricting access to certain areas, and secretaries outside offices all work to minimize the degree to which territory holders need to deal directly with those who might want to enter (Knapp, 1978; Sundstrom & Sundstrom, 1986). In contrast, people who share offices are less able to regulate access to themselves and their space and are more likely to perceive territorial invasions, which, in turn, create conflict (Wollman et al., 1994). Even reactionary defenses, which often involve a certain amount of direct conflict, are likely to reduce conflict over the long term, if they clarify territorial boundaries and the costs of infringement so that organizational members will respect those boundaries in the future.

The key to understanding the relationship between conflict and territorial behaviors is considering the dynamics of the relationship over time. Without clearly marked and actively defended territories, the legitimate access to and control of those organizational objects would remain a contested issue. Territorial behaviors establish, communicate, and maintain territories and consequently reduce this conflict.

> *Proposition 7: To the degree that territorial behavior involves or creates socially agreed upon territories, it will decrease the level of process conflict among organizational members.*

Preoccupation

Along with its positive impacts, we argue that territoriality can also have important negative consequences for organizations. It can lead employees to become self-focused, taking away from their ability to connect with and focus on the goals of the organization. This self-focus emanates from worrying about and being preoccupied with marking and defending territories. To the extent that one is engaging in behaviors aimed at constructing, communicating, maintaining, and restoring his or her organizational territories, one has less time, energy, and capacity to focus on higher-priority issues regarding the job and organizational goals. When individuals' resources—be they physical, intellectual, or emotional—are depleted, they are less able to be psychologically present in specific work situations (Hall & Richter, 1989; Kahn, 1992). Just as other discretionary organizational behaviors, such as organizational citizenship behaviors, may deplete one's ability to fully engage in inrole performance (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983), so too may territorial behaviors.

> *Proposition 8: Territorial behavior will distract organizational members from inrole performance.*

Isolation

Territoriality can also create isolation among organizational members, undermining the connectedness necessary for optimal organizational functioning. We believe that territoriality can lead to isolation among organizational members by affecting the territorial individual and by affecting how others perceive the territorial individual.

First, territoriality may lead organizational members to seek less interaction with others and to behave in ways that work against the

knowledge sharing, cooperation, and flexible movement of resources that facilitate organizational productivity and innovation. Territoriality may push organizational members to become preoccupied with protecting their own "turf" or focusing their attention within their narrow "silos." This may lead them to be less cooperative with others who request help from them.

Territoriality may also affect others' perceptions of the individual. Highly territorial individuals may be seen as less cooperative or approachable. Prior experience with an individual may lead others to believe that individual is less willing to cooperate.

Likewise, organizational members may become so concerned with maintaining territorial boundaries and respecting others' territories that they do so at the expense of organizational goals. Because of shared norms governing territories, boundaries, and the costs of infringement, organizational members may be reluctant to venture into certain areas, take on certain roles, or engage with particular colleagues out of respect for another's ownership of those territories (even though doing so would be in the interest of the organization). For example, graduate students may be reluctant to work with faculty members whom other students have already claimed as "their own," even though such behavior is counterproductive to both the students' development and the goals of the faculty.

> *Proposition 9: Territorial behavior will increase the degree to which organizational members are isolated from one another.*

CONCLUSION

In this article we have introduced and examined territoriality in organizations. We began by establishing that psychological ownership leads to a series of territorial behaviors, including control-oriented and identity-oriented marking and anticipatory and reactionary defending. Together, these behaviors socially construct and maintain organizational objects as territories.

We have also explored some of the potential organizational consequences of territorial behavior. We argued that territoriality has important positive consequences for organizational commitment and the reduction of process conflict. We also noted the potential for territoriality to negatively affect organizations by detracting from inrole performance and increasing the isolation among individual members.

To conclude, we discuss future directions for territoriality research, methodological issues in studying territoriality, and its managerial implications.

Future Research Directions

The first issue to confront in territoriality research stems from the infancy of this research domain in organizational behavior. In order to progress, basic questions about the nature, causes, and consequences of territoriality need to be explored empirically. We believe that this paper provides a theoretical foundation for such studies.

Some basic descriptive studies might address the range of tactics that employees use to mark and defend their ownership over space, possessions, ideas, roles, and relationships. Additionally, research is needed to study individual differences in how, and how much, employees engage in these territorial behaviors. Although beyond the scope of this paper, interesting differences in territorial behaviors have been found in gender (Smith, 1981; Wells, 2000), status and power (Esser, 1968; Esser, Chamberlain, Chapple, & Kline, 1965), different ethnicities (Smith, 1981, 1983; Worchel & Lollis, 1982), and personality traits such as dominance (Sundstrom & Altman, 1974; Taylor & Lanni, 1981), to name just a few examples. Other basic issues for empirical research suggested by our article include the effectiveness of different marking and defense strategies and the dynamics of infringement, including its emotional and psychological impacts on employees.

A second research direction concerns territoriality at different levels of analysis. Although we believe addressing territoriality from an individual level provides a good foundation for understanding this phenomenon, we also see value in extending our analysis to groups and organizations, both of which also exhibit territoriality. Groups mark territories in similar ways as individuals, such as claiming group membership through nicknames, passwords, special gatherings, and predetermined membership lists. Groups also defend territories, such as valued projects, by blocking other groups' access to their resources and ideas.

Similarly, organizations mark their territories to express identity through company logos and architecture, or through norms regarding organizational dress (Pratt & Rafaeli, 1997). Organizations may exhibit control-oriented marking by placing security at the front of a building, or with the use of corporate policies, departmental rules, and even contracts regarding proprietary information. Examining territoriality at the organization level may facilitate our understanding of such issues as the dynamics of knowledge transfer in organizations (Szulanski, 2003) and how mergers, takeovers, and other significant organizational changes affect organizations and their members.

A third important research direction involves the relationship between territoriality and emotion. Many of the experiences we have associated with territoriality involve discrete emotions of fear, anger, and jealousy, as well as a wider range of emotions related to marking, defending, creating, holding, and losing territories. Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) may provide a useful framework to explore many of these connections and to understand the role of territoriality in emotions, and vice versa. For example, infringements may lead to feelings of victimization or emotional losses that transcend the material loss (Gifford, 1997).

Understanding the emotions surrounding territories will help us understand why people defend territories that seem, to observers, relatively unimportant and replaceable. Similarly, feelings of loss, fear of infringements, and threats to identity that lead to additional fears are all directly and indirectly related to territoriality. CEOs, company founders, and retirees from companies often suffer grief when they leave a company. We argue that the study of territoriality offers insight in this area because it considers the emotional loss accompanying loss of a territory (a mechanism by which to express identity, be efficacious, and feel connected).

A fourth important research direction involves the interaction between organizational change and territoriality. Today's corporate environment is filled with events that fundamentally disrupt organizational territories; mergers, acquisitions, plant and office relocations, reengineering of work flow layoffs, and temporary projects all force organizational members to redraw territorial boundaries and reinterpret the meanings attached to a variety of organizational spaces, relationships, roles, and possessions. Organizational change threatens to disrupt existing territories and individuals' identities. These conditions provide excellent opportunities for examining territoriality in action; it may be much easier to observe the social construction and defense of territories in unstable, conflicted spaces than when most territories are well established and taken for granted.

Moreover, the study of territoriality in conditions of organizational change may provide useful insights into the change processes themselves. Territories and territorial behavior help organizational members define their identities, which are often at risk in times of significant organizational change. Thus, the processes through which territories in organizations change and the consequences of those changes are important areas for future research (Donald, 1994).

A final research direction is the exploration of what we call "negative territoriality." Individuals' identity and self-esteem are affected by what these individuals see themselves as attached to (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Because spoiled organizational images may transfer to organizational members (Sutton & Callahan, 1987), it is important for organizational members to control what is and is not associated with them as individuals. For these reasons, individuals may develop psychological "disownership" and may actively try to communicate to others that they have no relationship with those objects or entities in order to protect their self-image. In a sense, these avoided objects may be viewed as "hot potatoes," in that they are not only undervalued but that one may experience a loss or detrimental effects from having a relationship with them. Examples of such hot potatoes might be involvement on committees that are onerous and association with individuals who have bad reputations.

As with psychological ownership, there are likely territorial behaviors that people use to communicate to others what does not belong to them. Examples of negative territoriality might include public announcements that one is not involved with a particular issue or strong reactions to suggestions that one may be involved with a particular colleague or issue.

Methodological Issues

A critical first step in empirically studying territoriality in organizations is to develop sound methods for doing so. We believe that the study of territoriality is amenable to a variety of methodological approaches. To assess the psychological concepts in territoriality, such as psychological ownership and perceived infringement, some form of self-report instruments would be appropriate. Similarly, the study of many of the social variables of territoriality, such as territory itself and agreements and disagreements over territory, could involve the comparison of self-reports across organizational members.

These self-report instruments could take the form of a validated survey instrument using a list of behaviors and Likert-type scales that ask organizational members to report the extent to which they (or specific others) have engaged in each behavior in a specified time frame. Several considerations are required in the development of these scales of territoriality. First, in the item development phase, it is critical to capture behaviors that are closely aligned with each definition of the four types of territoriality, both in terms of the nature of the behavior and the function that it serves. Second, it is critical to capture a wide range of behaviors for each type of territoriality so as to ensure content validity. Third, the behaviors must be specific enough so that actors can remember and report on engaging in them, yet they must be general enough that the scales can be applied to a wide range of employees and contexts. Although the development of such instruments is not a simple task, it will likewise not be particularly onerous if one follows the direction of the many published scale development studies on behaviors in organizations, such as those measuring organizational citizenship behavior, workplace deviance, influence tactics, and whistle-blowing.

These self-report instruments, for at least some types of territories, could also take the form of graphic or map-oriented instruments similar to those used in environmental psychology (cf. Sebba & Churchman, 1983). Thus, for example, organizational members could mark on a map those territories they perceive as belonging to themselves or others, those territories that they perceive as shared, and those that are public. Comparisons across organizational members in terms of their perceptions of the nature and size of territories could be readily examined with this method.

There are also many methods that could be used to study territorial behavior, such as how organizational members mark their territory and how often they engage in defensive territorial behavior. Again, traditional survey instruments could be used to assess the frequency of specific territorial behaviors, using both self-reports as well as reports from other organizational members. Additionally, the use of event sampling methods (see, for example, Diener, Smith, & Fujita, 1995) might be particularly helpful for capturing frequent but otherwise unmemorable territorial behaviors in real time—for example, at set intervals, study participants would be primed on their handheld computers to provide a brief report about specific territorial behaviors they or others have engaged in during the last time period.

Observations and interviews of organizational members could provide rich behavioral data. These qualitative methods could be used, for instance, to study a move from traditional offices to open floor plan cubicles, and they provide rich theoretical insights into the creation and conflict over territory in organizations. At the other end of the methodological spectrum, some research questions may be more amenable to experimental designs involving either the observation or manipulation of marking, invasion, and defense of territories; environmental psychology provides strong examples of how experimental methods can profitably be used in the study of territoriality (e.g., Taylor & Lanni, 1981).

Managerial Implications

We believe that territoriality has significant implications for managers and organizations. First, it is imperative for managers to understand that territoriality is an inherent, inevitable, and prevalent element of organizational life and, consequently, an important part of their day-to-day jobs. As we have attempted to clarify above, territorial behaviors potentially have both positive and negative implications for organizations. Thus, managers should embrace and even encourage territorial behavior such as marking and personalization that can increase commitment to and identification with the orga-

nization. Moreover, managers should find ways to foster effective territorial behavior so that identity- and control-oriented marking quickly resolve territorial claims, making the boundaries of ownership explicit and clear. This can reduce conflict and make the sharing of resources more efficient so that employees can remain task focused.

A second implication for managers concerns the design and arrangement of physical space in organizations. In the last few decades, many organizations have gone from private offices to primarily open offices with few partitions. "Hoteling" has also become more popular—an arrangement whereby individuals who are working away from their primary office space borrow whatever office space is available. One of the explanations for these changes in the arrangement of working space has been cost reduction. Our discussion of territoriality suggests, however, that some costs have not been entered into the equation, such as a loss of employee commitment or the potential increase in conflict when employees' territories are threatened, lost, or nonexistent.

Finally, organizations need to carefully consider their policies on workspace personalization. Some organizations do not allow personal displays because of the fear they will compete with organizational identity. Organizations must recognize, however, that people strive for balance between inclusion in the group and individuality (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Expression of oneself in territories through marking enables organizational members to participate in and belong to the organization while maintaining their individuality. Additionally, employees are generally happier if they are allowed to personalize (Wells, 2000). Thus, norms and policies that suppress identity-oriented marking may lead to frustration and dissatisfaction of some members.

In conclusion, the study of territoriality in organizations offers a practically important and theoretically exciting area for organizational research. It complements the growing interest in psychological ownership by providing a foundation for examining its behavioral manifestations. In this article, we have introduced a set of concepts that can provide the foundation for work in this area, and we have articulated a set of relationships among those concepts that can anchor empirical research. The relationships between individuals and objects in organizations have a clear and significant impact on the relationships among individuals and on the relationships between individuals and organizations. Thus, we feel that research on territoriality is important and offers a promising area of inquiry for organizational scholars.

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