How adults infer Ownership: More than an object kind rule?
Greta Defeyter, Danielle Fleck & Sarah Malcolm

Introduction
Inferring who owns an object
Previous research has shown that both adults and children use a first possession heuristic to infer ownership (Friedman & Neary, 2007)
Inferring whether objects are owned
People are quick to judge whether objects are owned, the question is how?
Proposal
Historical reasoning and object kind rule (Friedman, Neary & Defeyter, in press)

Aim: To empirically test this proposal

Method
22 participants (mean age= 20 years; age range 18 to 26 years) were presented with a set of 90 computer images of natural kinds and artifacts in settings that were incongruent, congruent or neutral to that object. Participants were asked: Is this object owned? The time allowed for responding to each test item was 2 seconds per image, when this time elapsed the next image appeared on screen. SOA was 1 second.

Results
There was a significant main effect of object type on the number of objects judged as owned, Wilks’ Lambda =0.072, F (1,23) =296.599, p = .001; artifacts (M=13.9) were judged to be owned significantly more than natural kinds (M = 3.6). There was also a significant main effect of context on the number of objects judged as owned, Wilks’ Lambda = .408, F (2,22) =11.521, p = .001; This interaction was driven by the congruent natural condition and differences of context on natural kind objects.

Discussion
The results suggest that people are more likely to judge artifacts as owned and natural kinds as not-owned. However, this basic kind account does not seem to account for all situations, (a beautiful leaf on a kitchen table). The object kind account may operate in conjunction with attempts to reconstruct the history of an object in relation to people.

The default assumption for natural kinds may be that they are not owned, but people may attempt to infer the objects history to overturn this default. The default should be overturned when it seems that someone previously possessed that object and has not purposely discarded it but rather likely intends to use it again.