Sharing Space: Extending Belk's (2010) "Sharing"

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ABSTRACT:

The concept of sharing, as elaborated by Belk (2010), is universal, improves the efficient use of resources, increases security through communal bonding, and takes place primarily in the "interior world" of home. However, the manifestation of sharing differs greatly when the context of sharing is within the "exterior world" of public spaces. This article extends Belk's (2010) "Sharing," by examining the characteristics and dimensions of sharing space. We put forth the elements of personal space, ownership and territoriality as factors that influence the sharing of space, and present the concept of social mixing as being beneficial to consumers.

Sharing in some form or another is universal and pervasive across nations, regions and cultures. People share homes and other material possessions including food and clothing. Belk (2007, 127) describes sharing as "an alternative to the private ownership that is emphasized in both marketplace exchange and gift giving. In sharing, two or more people may enjoy the benefits (or costs) that flow from possessing a thing. Rather than distinguishing what is *mine and yours*, sharing defines something as *ours."* Belk (2010) provides an extensive theoretical review of the concept of sharing and distinguishes "sharing in" and "sharing out" in terms of gift giving and exchange. As a behavior, sharing and its related characteristics are seen as a taken-for-granted expectation that may or may not involve reciprocity. Sharing has both depth and breadth. The owner of a valued resource for example, must decide how much of that resource to keep for himself (owner advantage). This refers to sharing breadth. How much of the resource to be shared with others must also be considered, and this refers to sharing depth (Gruven, 2004). Though integral to our understanding of consumer behavior, sharing has received little attention in the literature. Addressing this deficiency, Belk (2010) explores the domain of sharing in primary and extended families from the perspective of bonds and kinship, communities, individual versus cultural sharing, and theories of sharing relative to acquisition and distribution mechanisms. Accordingly, Belk (2010, 717) states: "Sharing tends to be a communal act that links us to other people. It is not the only way in which we may connect with others, but it is a potentially powerful one that creates feelings of solidarity and bonding." In light of Belk's comprehensive capsulation of the concept of sharing and its depth in content to extending our understanding of consumer behavior, we support this view of sharing and offer a context of sharing that Belk does not address.

While quite comprehensive, one domain of sharing not addressed in Belk's work is the concept of *sharing space.* By space we mean public places where centrality and meaning of the space differs between individuals or groups (i.e., seating on a bus, space on a beach, table space in a café) (Altman, 1975), and where behaviors are a function of the ascribed meaning given to the space by the user. The features and physical attributes of the space support the goals and activities desired by the user (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981). Unlike the primary territories of household and family spaces where ownership is readily determined, the mingled nature of public places meant to be shared with others, precludes identifying who has control over the space, and the conditions under which sharing is allowed or prohibited.

Belk (2010, 716) speculates that sharing is overlooked because it is more characteristic of "the interior world of the home rather than the exterior worlds of work and the market." By examining sharing in the exterior world of public places, our understanding of the construct of sharing can be deepened. In particular, the context of "third places" is appropriate due to the extended time consumers are in this space.

Because our focus is on consumers rather than citizens, we consider the sharing of commercial public space rather than taxpayer-supported public space such as libraries, parks and streets. Some of these spaces have enforced time limits (e.g., parking limited to 2 hours), a form of mandated sharing. However, some consumer behaviors in relation to sharing space are exhibited in non-commercial public space as well as commercial public space.

"Third Place" Public Space

A growing trend is to create public settings where consumers feel comfortable and relaxed. Intended to give the feeling of home, these hybrid public spaces are often adorned in soft colors, pleasant lighting, soft comfortable sofas and chairs arranged around low tables, ottomans on which to rest one's feet and soothing background music, rivaling many cosmopolitan living rooms. These spaces are categorized as the *third place,* a term coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg to describe informal public gathering places (e.g., cafes, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons) where people spend significant time away from more formal gathering places. Third places "are the core settings of informal public life…a generic designation for a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home designated as the first place and work as the second place" (Oldenburg 1999, 16). Unlike home and work, no one has the clear "right" to possess the space in a third place (with the exception of the owner, of course).

The objective of creating these environments is to encourage consumers to extend their stay, socialize, and by so doing, consume more. Howard Schultz (Schultz and Yang 1997, 120), chairman of Starbucks, often makes reference to Starbucks stores as "third places:" "In the 1990s, coffee bars became a central component of the American social scene in part because they fulfilled the need for a nonthreatening gathering spot, a 'third

place' outside of work and home." While coffee houses existed much earlier than the 1990s both in the U.S. and the world, Starbucks' expansion in the 1990s focused on the creation of third place environments. These settings radiate the negotiated use and sharing of space, denoting where people are expected to sit intimately, with softer materials used to create the textures for invited interaction (Monin and Sayers 2006). Although the invitation to share space and socialize with others is encouraged by the food/drink offerings, layout, physical features and ambience, consumers in these settings often do not socialize, and in fact, go out of their way to avoid sharing space. Unlike the Ottoman coffeehouse culture Karababa and Ger (2011) explored, where people of differing social and economic positions gathered and engaged in conversational debates, as a norm in the contemporary café setting, social interaction almost seems frowned upon and may be even considered against proper etiquette (McGrath 2006). Consumers flock to be in the company of others without necessarily interacting with them, what Morill et al. (2005) call "together alone," Shapira and Navon (1991) call "alone togetherness," and Putnam (2000) describes as "bowling alone." While in the presence of others, consumers stay connected through technology-enabled emailing, texting and instant messaging, what Turkle (2011) calls "the social robotic." Consumers feel connected in solitude through technology, which facilitates being alone together.

Sharing Personal Space

Sharing personal space comfortably requires some knowledge of those with whom the space is shared. Personal space involves the boundary surrounding individual bodies, and is one of several environmental mechanisms that people use to regulate privacy and accessibility to others (Altman & Chemers, 1980). Personal space is not visible to others; however, the centrality of personal space to each individual is such that intrusion creates tension or discomfort for the individual who has been intruded upon (Altman, 1975; Sommer, 1969). In describing the invisible nature of personal boundaries, Sommer (1969, 26) states that, "personal space refers to an area with an invisible boundary surrounding the person's body into which intruders may not come. Like porcupines…people like to be close enough to obtain warmth and comradeship but far enough away to avoid pricking one another." However, personal space as an invisible boundary surrounding oneself is movable. It travels with each individual wherever they may go and acts as a part of a buffer zone to protect oneself against perceived threats to one's emotional well-being (Dosey & Meisels, 1969).

Culture. Cultural differences influence the sharing of personal space. In cultures with common ideology and social and ethnic provenance, the concept of sharing personal space is more communitarian in belief and therefore accepted. Personal space has collective significance in maintaining harmony. On the other hand, cultures with ideological, social and ethnic cacophony, there is less likely to be unanimity in belief or acceptance of sharing space. Rather, the emphasis is on individualistic preference. Thus, dissonance is likely even in cases of accommodative sharing among unknown individuals.

Within cultures with high spatial density, non-verbal behaviors are oftentimes employed in maintaining some semblance of personal space. Density is a physical condition involving the limitation of space (Stokols 1972a, 1972b). Functionally, it is a measure of the number of people per unit of space. Density exists when the number of individuals in a setting is greater than the available capacity. In high-density countries like China for example, avoiding eye contact is a widely held cultural practice that is a respected means of controlling personal space. In both high and low density conditions, the use of sunglasses and electronic devices like earphones, also allows for the control of interpersonal space. In this case, the personal space has very little physical content, but is rather cognitive sense-making and sense-preserving space.

 Rugh (1984, 37) offers some comparative examples of Western and Eastern cultures. Someone in an empty theater in the West would feel resentful if someone sat down beside them, rather than in other available space that would maintain spatial distance and privacy. "Westerners…carry with them a spatial cocoon that they do not like to see violated. Westerners fill up theaters, beaches, buses – all public places in fact – by a system of keeping reasonable distances between themselves and others… Westerners forced to sit near each other effect privacy by not speaking to those around them." In Egypt, by contrast, occupancy of such spaces tend to fill up by "clumps, people deliberately choosing places near each other…They enjoy the movement around them of other people and like to watch and interact with their neighbors...no rewards are expected other than the pleasant sense of social contact itself." Comparatively, as a societally conscious being, the individual is valued; while alone, the individual is insignificant, Thus Westerners' concept of privacy is coterminous with individualism, whereas the Middle Easterner's is not (Belk, forthcoming).

Gender. Gender plays a role in the sharing of space. Gender has been shown to influence the size of space claimed in public places. Edney & Jordan-Edney (1974) observed that lone males and groups of four and above tended to claim larger space on a beach, while lone females and triads claimed smaller ones. Some spaces and places transmit clearly gendered messages that influence how space is used and understood. In some cultures, gendered public and quasi-public spaces exists. Sobh and Belk (2011) describe gendered institutionalized and demarcated public spaces in Qatar. For example, in public settings like public schools, universities and hospitals, gender segregation is institutionalized to accommodate privacy for women. Waiting areas and entrances to public places are gender-differentiated, ensuring that space is never shared across genders.

In some commercial settings, sharing space between genders is expected. For example, in nightclub settings single women occupying a booth are likely to welcome the intrusion of male(s), and be open to sharing the space. Similarly, a group of males in the same setting would welcome the intrusion of female(s). Therefore, even though territorial space may be claimed, gender and the context of the setting will impact the responses to territorial intrusion and the likelihood of sharing space.

Nevertheless, in public spaces, the boundaries of personal space are less controllable and thus likely to be intruded upon by others. Deliberate or by accident, uninvited intrusion into one's space can have negative consequences especially if the uninvited individual is judged to be rude or pushy. Thus, to expect personal space maintenance and control over interpersonal spatial proximity from others in public places is unrealistic, because public spaces are shared spaces only temporarily controlled by the occupants (Lyman & Scott, 1967). Being forced to share personal space may bring discomfort, causing consumers to shift body positions, look away, stare at the ceiling or floor and avoid eye-gaze interaction with others in the setting. Whether in a cramped elevator or in wide-open spaces, personal space and the mechanisms used to enforce our portable boundaries regulate how closely we interact with others, share our space or compensate to avoid intrusion.

Territoriality

To ensure aloneness in a setting full of other customers, and to dissuade uninvited interaction, consumers often behave territorially over the space they occupy. Behaviors like spreading out personal effects (e.g., books, clothing, food items) to form a boundary and

signal no desire to share space, and the use of electronic devices to signal no desire to engage in any conversation or to listen to others, minimize the possibility of social interaction. Behaving territorially is an indication that an occupant does not wish to share space.

Territorial behavior is often expressed by marking space with personal items to create a defined boundary and a barrier against intrusion. The display sends the message that the space is not open for use or to be shared by uninvited others. Territorial behavior is "a self/other boundary-regulation mechanism that involves personalization of or marking of a place or object and communication that it is 'owned' by a person or group. Personalization and ownership are designed to regulate social interaction and to help satisfy various social and physical motives. Defense responses may sometimes occur when territorial boundaries are violated" (Altman 1975, p. 107). Through the visible cues used to mark space, social interaction is regulated and any potential conflict is circumvented.

Fundamentally, people cannot behave territorially over space unless they have first claimed the space, and make it of some personal value. Space that is claimed and marked becomes one's designated territory. Sharing claimed territory depends on the type of territory, its value and meaning for the owner, and knowledge of or commonalities with others. Altman (1975) proposed that there are basically three types of territories: primary (i.e., home), secondary (i.e., work) and public (i.e., third places), which are distinguishable based on five dimensions: (1) the centrality of the territory in the everyday lives and use of the person or group; (2) the duration or permanence of the occupancy; (3) the degree to which the occupant(s) claim the territory as their own; (4) the markers delineating spoken for space; (5) occupants' response to territorial intrusions. Whether one shares claimed space or behaves territorially over the space depends on the imbued value and meanings of the territory for the individual or group.

Primary territories are essential to daily life and are exclusively owned and used by individuals or families. They are exclusively used by the owner, and they offer an abundance of affordances including privacy and solitude for adults, escape from neighbors, or a setting for formal, controlled interaction with friends (Taylor & Stough, 1978). Sharing primary territories typically occurs through invitation from the owner-occupants. Uninvited intrusion can result in significant conflict and defensive actions.

In secondary territories like workplaces, individuals and groups have some level of control, ownership and regulatory power over the space; however, in a diminished degree relative to primary territories. These territories are less central, less pervasive and less exclusive for the users. For example, one's designated office space can be personalized to reflect ownership, and the owner dictates the extent to which other co-workers may use or share the space. Some secondary territories like social clubs may have rules limiting occupants, membership, and accessibility to resources (Altman, 1975). As these spaces are accessible by a greater number of users compared to primary territories, sharing comes with constraints. Regular users of secondary territories tend to exert some restriction, formal or informal on who is allowed to use the space (Taylor & Stough, 1978), and the frequency with which space is used and shared.

Public spaces are freely accessible by everyone, with no person or group having claims of any sort to the space. They have a temporary quality in their usage as with playgrounds, beaches, parks, and use of the space and appropriateness of activities engaged in is governed by laws, customs and regulations (Altman, 1975). Thus, use of the space is free as long as users observe the rules and regulations. Public territories are not central to the users or occupants, and use is determined on a first come, first served basis (Brown, 1987). Individuals using these temporary public territories have a tendency of utilizing personal markers like books, coats, luggage, etc. to define and defend the specific spaces they are using (Becker, 1973). Although open and accessible to everyone, there are some public territories that carry social norm restrictions. For example, bars are accessible to everyone except those under the legal drinking age.

Sharing space in public places can also reflect the level of social mixing of known and unknown individuals. Cavan (1966) determined that hard-core regulars of a neighborhood bar (patrons who may be found at the establishment on a frequent and recurring basis and for whom the establishment is considered primary territory) often treated new customers as outsiders or intruders, including making insulting or offensive statements and prohibiting use of particular amenities in the setting. The bar territory was the mainstay of intimate social life for the regulars who considered the bar their personal domain, and who frequently designate the place as "my bar," "home" a "second home," or a "home away from home." The mix of regulars with non-regulars increases the likelihood that regulars will behave territorially over the space claimed. Tumbat and Belk (2011) elaborate similarly in their study of Mount Everest climbers. Social interaction would be expected as a function of

the openness and accessibility to the space and the shared experience. However, rather than sharing the place and experience, climbers and guides preferred privacy and demarcated and expressed concerns over their territorial boundaries. Further, with only the fabric of the tents to provide any semblance of privacy, participants and guides raised their tents with great distance away from others as a means of claiming and maintaining personal space.

Likewise, gender can also have an effect on likelihood of the occupant of the space sharing the space when confronted by an intruder. Polit and LaFrance (1977) examined gender differences in reaction to spatial invasion. They found that when invaded, females would withdraw and share space more quickly than males, and that males were more likely to hold on to their territory, refusing to share and reaffirming the legitimacy to their claimed space.

Territoriality is expected in primary and secondary spaces as these are more central to one's identity and wellbeing. Sharing is most common with known others like family and co-workers. However, in public spaces, territoriality is less expected, but widely practiced and enforced by the occupants. There is a greater attempt to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions of those in these settings by asserting and attempting to enforce control over an area that is claimed (Sack 1983). In public space, markers serve to not only symbolize occupied space, but also to protect the space by serving as a visible deterrent for increasing personal distance and decreasing conflict.

When self-relevant spaces (i.e., home and work) are intruded upon, the occupant's response is likely to be commensurate in intensity with the loss of control. For example, uninvited attempts to share one's desk, office space, home or bedroom is likely to be met with strong defensive actions as the violation disrupts one's stability and sense of security. In public spaces, ownership of the space is more fluid, and changes with the departure of the previous occupant. Sharing therefore can be accommodative if the occupant is forced by density or crowding or unobliging, enforcing territorial rights.
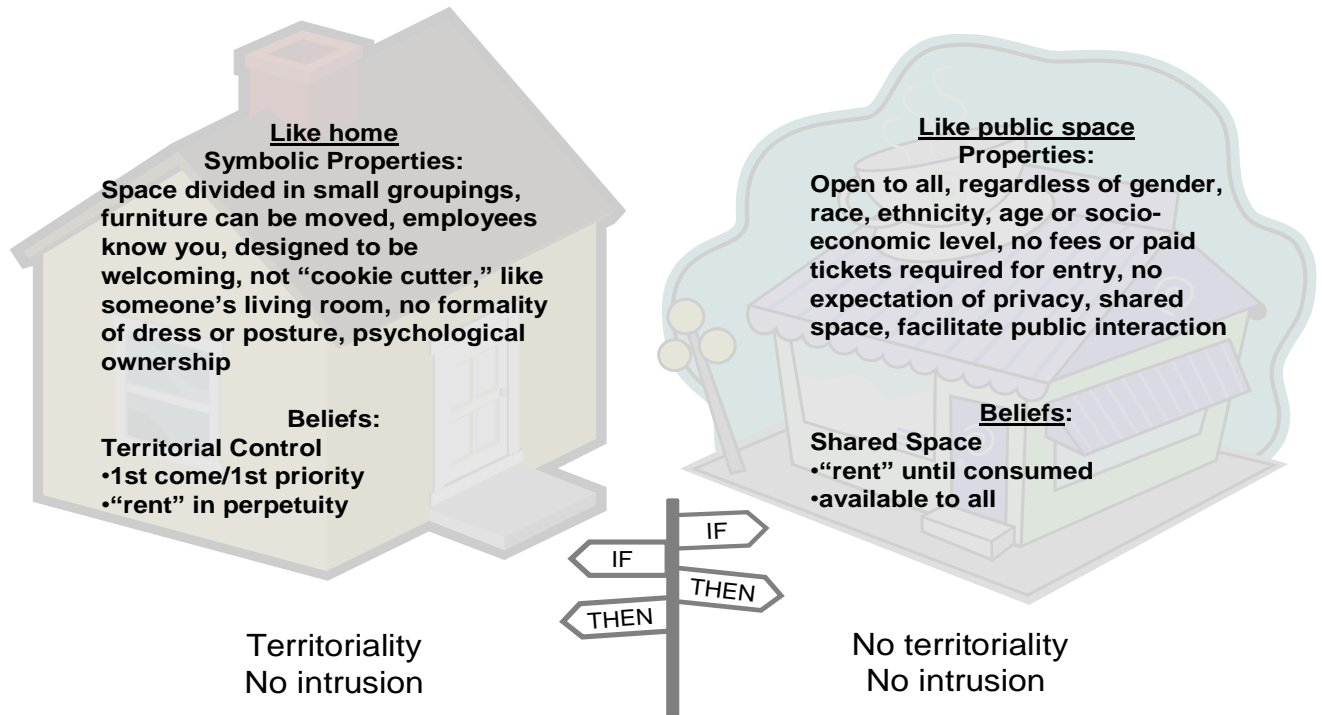
Ownership and Sharing Space

In distinguishing the characteristics of ownership in commodity exchanges and gift giving, Belk (2010) argues, "both gift giving and commodity ownership involve transfers of ownership, whereas sharing involves joint ownership, at least de facto." Ownership of space

shared in public places is layered with ambiguity as to the true nature of ownership. For example, a café has a unique owner to whom the property is assigned and secured with exclusive rights of ownership and responsibility. Subordinate ownership of the occupied space (i.e., table and chair) is presumed by the occupant but temporarily, extending only during the time the customer opts to remain in the space. De facto ownership of the space becomes recognized by others in the setting who associates the space with the occupant (Belk, forthcoming). In this respect, ownership is neither transferred nor jointly held.

Figure 1 shows the differing beliefs about café spaces. On the left side of the figure, cafés are designed to be "an extension of home" (Schultz and Yang 1997, 52), and possess the homey symbolic properties McCracken (1989) identified in the context of home. When consumers see the café as "like home," with homeyness properties, it is not surprising that they attempt to exert territorial control like they have over their homes, resisting sharing space. Such consumers justify their territorial control based on either the belief in first come/first priority or in "rent" in perpetuity (Griffiths and Gilly 2012). That is, belief that the occupant of the space has the right to use it as they please results in territoriality and an intention not to share space. However, other consumers view cafés as public space to be enjoyed equally by all. Cafés share the characteristics of public space, including open to all, no entry fees and no expectation of privacy. The belief in cafés as shared public space results in the view that the space should be available for all, or at the least, the space should be available for customers while they are consuming their purchases. Space should be shared with those needing it.

Problems arise when some consumers have beliefs represented on the left side of the figure while others have beliefs on the right side. The result is that some consumers behave territorially while other consumers do not respect territorial rights and therefore expect to share space. The third place concept is independent of commerce, and the ideal of individuals coming to the café to mingle with the community for unlimited time is implied. But, consumers co-opt café spaces and resist sharing by behaving territorially. Thus, boundaries erected within public social spaces prevent sharing and give rise to potential conflicts as the parameters for co-use become blurred.

Figure 1: Beliefs about Café Spaces

Like home
Symbolic Properties:
Space divided in small groupings, furniture can be moved, employees know you, designed to be welcoming, not "cookie cutter," like someone's living room, no formality of dress or posture, psychological ownership

Beliefs:
Territorial Control
•1st come/1st priority
•"rent" in perpetuity

Like public space
Properties:
Open to all, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, age or socio-economic level, no fees or paid tickets required for entry, no expectation of privacy, shared space, facilitate public interaction

Beliefs:
Shared Space
•"rent" until consumed
•available to all

IF
IF
THEN
THEN

Territoriality
No intrusion

No territoriality
No intrusion

Belk (2010) raises the question of cultural influences on sharing, and there are cultural aspects of sharing space as well. Hall (1959, 1969) documents cultural differences in perceptions of space, what he calls "proxemics," finding that Americans and other northern Europeans are uncomfortable when strangers get too close. Such national differences may play a role in consumers' comfort levels in sharing public space. Sharing space does not necessarily require prior understanding of commonalities, values, beliefs or attitudes between individuals about the space. However, the operating norms within the shared setting must be understood. In other words, shared values, beliefs and social ties are less necessary in the sharing of public spaces, while stated and unstated rules of sharing space are more important. The boundaries of use are often fluid and rules of etiquette may be inferred from the different types of behaviors and social conduct exhibited by the users of the space. Thus the culture of sharing public space is transmitted through users modeling particular behaviors. For example, the activities of café patrons (i.e., reading, studying, etc.) are observable cues that suggest the culture of the café and communicates the etiquette (i.e., quiet) required for newcomers or "familiar strangers" (Paulos & Goodman, 2004). These

visible dimensions of customers' experiences relay what Warnaby (2012, 14) refers to as "genius loci" or the "spirit of the place" which differentiates it from other spaces and reveals what is reciprocally expected from those who choose to enter and occupy space.

While some authors contend that "third places" may exist in cyberspace (Steinkuehler and Williams 2006; Ducheneaut, Moore and Nickell 2007) we argue that online spaces shared by participants (e.g., Everquest, Second Life) are sufficiently different from real life sharing of space that we do not include them in this discussion. As well, membership in these virtual environments is often required so that participants learn the shared etiquette, norms, and rules of sharing, unlike a coffee shop open to all.

Characteristics of Sharing Space

Sharing with family and friends is not the same as sharing public space with strangers, and table 1 summarizes how sharing space is similar to, and different from, sharing as described by Belk (2010). Instead of mothering and pooling resources, the prototype can be seen as hosting with the occupant/host accommodating the intruder/guest when sharing space does take place. Instead of one household member sharing pooled resources with another, the original occupant's space is now subdivided for the other customer to have their own space; no one would expect the original occupant to share their coffee or food.

Public space is the context for our discussion of sharing such that ownership cannot be transferred from one customer to another; only temporal ownership of space is possible. Munro and Madigan (1999) talk about how the living room in the home is shared by being "time-zoned" whereby children have use of the space early in the evening, while the adults have priority later after young children go to bed and older children go to their rooms. This type of space sharing in public venues may take place (e.g., students use the café as study space during the day and others use it for socializing at night), but our focus here is on consumers who want the same space at the same time.

Table 1: Comparative Prototypes and Characteristics of Sharing and Sharing Space

	Sharing (Belk 2010)	**Sharing Space**
Prototype	1. Mothering 2. Pooling and allocation of household resources	1. Hosting 2. Dividing up available space
Characteristics	Nonreciprocal Social links to others De facto or de jure shared ownership or usufruct rights Money irrelevant Singular objects Networked inclusion Inalienable Personal Dependent Sharing context Social reproduction Non ceremonial Love, caring	No transfer of ownership Temporal sharing of space Lingering unstated obligations of occupant owner, expecting intruder not to engage in sabotage Purchase gives occupancy rights Servicescape Open to the Public Negotiable Personal Unknown and/or "Familiar Strangers" Public space as context Third place Non-ceremonial, but contextual norms Courtesy, civility
Counterindications	Reciprocal expectations Formal monetary debt Forced compliance Exchange Thank you's	Reciprocal expectations Intentional deception Forced compliance Exchange Thank you's
Exceptions	Borrowing and lending Some paid caregiving Voluntary anonymous charity	Accommodation Forced sharing Voluntary giving up space

Whereas money is irrelevant in Belk's conception of space, Griffiths and Gilly (2012) reveal that at least some consumers believe that purchase of products gives occupancy rights, either until consumption or in perpetuity. Love and caring underlies sharing as described by Belk, but courtesy and civility are the cornerstones of sharing public space; those customers who do not share space when asked are viewed as rude. While Belk sees sharing as inalienable, in the context of sharing public space, it is negotiable. Often, employees are called upon to mediate such negotiations between customers who both want café space. Customers who feel place attachment may also serve as guides to newcomers, suggesting alternative space with electrical outlets, moving tables and otherwise treating café space in a way expected of employees.

Belk (2010) identifies several counterindications of sharing. In his conceptualization, reciprocal expectations have no role in sharing. Similarly, in the sharing of public space, there is no expectation that the intruder will provide anything to the occupant (except perhaps in expecting the intruder who has been accommodated to not sabotage the occupant and to behave in accordance with the unspoken conditions in which the space was

shared, i.e., being quiet, non-disruptive if the original occupant was engaged in reading/studying or activities requiring concentration). One way to avoid the sharing of public space is to engage in intentional deception of the intruder. Intentional deception involves the occupant lying to the intruder when the occupant asked to share space. The following verbatims from Griffiths and Gilly (2012) elucidate the concept in the context of defense of café space:

> I've seen it get very territorial and people refuse to share, and then lie to maintain their position… Some [people] are pretty nice if you end up wanting to share, others will say flat out "no I'm saving this for somebody." Even though you could be there for another hour and there'll be no one who'll stand up or even come to the chair (Matthew, interview).

> I mean they'll say that it's taken and you could watch and no one ever comes… I was going to study with my friend and all they had was big tables, so we were at one of the big tables, but our big table only had one chair. So we went over to this other table and asked if the chair was taken. The girl says yes, so we went to another table and got another chair eventually. My friend was like dude no one's ever come, and we were there for like 2 hours…. yeah, people lie all the time so that they don't have to deal with a stranger sitting at their table (Lydia, interview).

Recipients of intentional deception may find alternative space but still monitor not only the space, but also the length of time that passes while the space is unoccupied. Seeing the space still unoccupied after an extended time is confirmation that they have been duped. This knowledge may be followed by no action, especially if the intruder is satisfied with the alternate space found; however, the intruder may act by engaging the occupant again to not only challenge the deception, but also in an attempt to gain access to the space. Such forced compliance, like Belk's conceptualization, is a counterindication of sharing. Also, as Belk points out, exchange is an indication that something other than sharing is taking place. While unusual, exchange can take place in public spaces whereby an individual occupying a larger space is asked to exchange with a larger party and move to a smaller space. But this scenario would not then indicate sharing of space.

Belk (2010, 721) does not extensively discuss the exceptions to sharing he includes in table 1. For sharing public space, accommodation involves the occupant making room for

the intruder when asked. Occupants may also voluntarily give up their space when they see the café becoming more crowded. Like the shared meat in Belk's (2010, 722) example of hunter-gatherer societies, public property in the contemporary U.S. may be "seen as common property with everyone entitled to a share." The café occupant's generosity in sharing space is not stressed, just as the hunter is not being generous in acceding to demand sharing by others as a matter of entitlement. Griffiths and Gilly (2012) rarely saw intruders demand sharing by sitting at an occupied table, but it did happen:

> Someone wanted to sit down, saw all the tables were packed. It was one of those tables with four chairs. So one person had one side – the first person had all their stuff spread out there, except for a little corner, and the other person just sat down [and] didn't say anything. So, the first person just moved their stuff over so the other person could study (Pedro, interview).

Dimensions of Sharing Space

Belk (2010) discusses a number of conceptual dimensions of sharing deserving of further research. These dimensions can be applied to sharing space as well. For example, just as certain consumers exhibit attachment to possessions, the environmental psychology literature acknowledges that some people have place attachment (Brown, et al. 2003; Edney 1972; Etzioni 1991). Being a regular at a bar or café gives consumers feelings of ownership such that they may defend the space from newcomers by making them feel uncomfortable and unwanted.

Also recognized as discouraging sharing is a tendency toward independence rather than interdependence (Belk 2010, 728). Belk's statement that: "By clinging tightly to individual possessions we place barriers between ourselves and others" can be taken literally in the context of sharing public space. Personal possessions, such as books, jackets, and computers, are used by occupants as literal barriers to sharing space with others.

Issues for future research

The partners involved in commodity exchanges are termed *buyers and sellers* and in gift exchange, *givers and receivers*. "But there are no separate terms to distinguish the parties in sharing" (Belk 2010, 720). However, the parties involved in the sharing of public

spaces do have distinctive identities of *occupant* as the original "owner" of the space, and *intruder* as the individual seeking to share space. The occupant as the owner is the first to claim the space in the public setting, and in doing so, may mark the space using personal objects to demonstrate claim-staking. Marking the space, the occupant demonstrates their desired privacy within the public space and preference for not sharing it.

Invading marked space can cause significant discomfort resulting in the occupant's attempt to accommodate him/herself (e.g., shift chair or adjust body position) or leave the space altogether. Felipe and Sommer's (1966) study of reaction to marked space being intruded upon in a university library identified non-verbal responses to the intrusion by the occupant. The occupant's discomfort was evident by responses like turning away from the intruder and exposing more back and shoulder, placing an elbow on the table, moving objects like books, purses, coats closer as if to erect a barrier in between the intruder.

Belk (2010, 717) talks extensively about the reciprocal aspect of sharing, although "no one keeps track of the balance between giving and receiving." Yet, reciprocal exchange is not feasible in sharing space as the probability of the occupant/intruder roles being reversed in the future is slight. Instead, sharing space appears to be driven by a philosophy of sharing; that is, public space is owned by the occupant, or public space is there for all to share. An intruder may engage in what Belk calls "demand sharing," where the request cannot be denied because shared public space is an entitlement. As Belk (2010, 725) points out, "pass-along sharing appears to be infectious and provides an example for recipients to emulate." Thus, when an intruder is permitted to share space, they may be more willing to share when they are in the occupant role.

Sharing a home implies unencumbered social interaction among those sharing the space. Most often this is harmonious sharing. However, in public places, sharing assumes social mixing with others, an element that for some consumers requires relinquishing some aspect of their own personal space and disregarding visual cues that distinguish individuals (e.g., gender, ethnicity) in order to mix or blend in with others. Social mixing refers to the composition of intermingling individuals with distinctly different demographic characteristics including social class, education, income and other socio-economic and cultural differences (Sarkissian, 1976). Typically used in the context of community design, housing policies, and neighborhood sustainability, the concept of social mixing has applicability here as communities are embedded in public spaces where sharing is expected across disparate individuals and groups of occupants. In a neighborhood café or bar setting, for example, the

composition of customers will include regulars who are well known to each other (Cavan, 1966). As familiars, the etiquette and efficacy of sharing space are known and may even be co-developed. Interjecting unfamiliar or new customers into the setting changes the dynamic as the rules of sharing and interacting are not known to the newcomers. Many an episode of "Friends" involved the focal group sitting on their favorite couch at Central Perk, only to be disturbed by others who did not know it was "their couch."

The underlying premise of social mixing is the creation of social cohesion, balance, inclusiveness and "community stability" (Sarkissian 1975, 241). In the context of shared public spaces, social mixing serves as a means of eliminating social polarization, engendering social interaction. However, the effectiveness of social mixing rests on the belief that the right composition of heterogeneously distinctive individuals interacting within common space will produce communal bonding and sharing.

As Belk (2010, 725) says: "The question of sharing outside of the immediate family is where the phenomenon of sharing becomes the most interesting and has the greatest social and theoretical implications." We agree, and suggest that the sharing of space in public places has the potential to be a particularly fruitful context for studying the construct of sharing. With ownership of space murky and the potential for conflict vs. third place bonding, this research has implications for consumer culture theory and improving the civic lives of consumers. Belk (2010) offers eight examples of issues in need of further research in understanding sharing behavior. We add the following examples in the context of sharing space:

1. While Belk suggests that sharing with non-family members is rare for adults in Western cultures, public space is a context in which sharing with strangers takes place. Certainly this is a potentially interesting area for cross-cultural investigation. Venkatraman and Nelson (2005) offer an alternative view of the café space in their study of Starbucks in the New China. Viewed as a space to experience American culture, Chinese consumers see Starbucks as a home environment where they can escape their crowded real homes and be themselves. Sharing space was not discussed in this article, but it would not be surprising to see Chinese consumers react differently to sharing space given their view of Starbucks as a place for "backstage behavior." As well, the notion of face may enter here, as status competition may occur between different tables in Chinese restaurants. If one table orders a $50 bottle of Cognac, the next table

may order a $75 bottle. As a result, some consumers in restaurants and Karaoke bars pay extra for private rooms to avoid communal space with its status competition (Chang and Holt 1994; Fung 2009). There are many aspects of sharing that can be examined in the context of public space use in different cultures.

2. Given that future sharing is not expected in the café environment, there may be an opportunity for the accommodated intruder to "pay it forward" and be accommodative when they become an occupant in the future. Belk (2010, 725) suggests that such "pass-along sharing is infectious" but the phenomenon has not been investigated. Public spaces are an ideal venue for researching pass-along sharing. Are intruders who are accommodated by occupants who then leave, more likely to accommodate other intruders?

3. What can be done to encourage the sharing of public space? Griffiths and Gilly's (2012) interviews with managers and employees of cafés indicate that they have not been able to solve the problem of territoriality. McDonalds is attempting to design stores with "zones" that accommodate different types of customer behavior (Harris 2010), but this merely separates consumers with disparate needs.

Conclusion

By studying how consumers share public space, we can enhance the understanding of the sharing concept that Belk (2010) began. Sharing space takes place outside the barriers of home and is visible to consumer researchers. By drawing on the work of environmental psychologists who rarely study commercial environments, research on sharing space can make a theoretical contribution to consumer research.

Oldenburg (1999) articulates the benefits of third places where diverse members of a community interact and build cohesiveness. Yet, at least in North America, public spaces end up being places where consumers are together alone (Morill et al. 2005). If we better understand how the sharing of public places could be encouraged, individual consumers could enhance their feelings of belonging, and societal benefits could result.

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