City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Bardhi, F. & Eckhardt, G.M. (2012). Access-Based Consumption: The Case of Car Sharing. Journal of Consumer Research, 39(4), pp. 881-898. doi: 10.1086/666376

This is the published version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/18256/

Link to published version: https://doi.org/10.1086/666376

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to City Research Online policy.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@citystgeorges.ac.uk

Access-Based Consumption: The Case of Car Sharing

FLEURA BARDHI
GIANA M. ECKHARDT

Access-based consumption, defined as transactions that can be market mediated but where no transfer of ownership takes place, is becoming increasingly popular, yet it is not well theorized. This study examines the nature of access as it contrasts to ownership and sharing, specifically the consumer-object, consumer-consumer, and consumer-marketer relationships. Six dimensions are identified to distinguish among the range of access-based consumptionscapes: temporality, anonymity, market mediation, consumer involvement, the type of accessed object, and political consumerism. Access-based consumption is examined in the context of car sharing via an interpretive study of Zipcar consumers. Four outcomes of these dimensions in the context of car sharing are identified: lack of identification, varying significance of use and sign value, negative reciprocity resulting in a big-brother model of governance, and a deterrence of brand community. The implications of our findings for understanding the nature of exchange, consumption, and brand community are discussed.

During the last decade, observers have noted that markets are giving way to networks, and alternative modes of acquisition and consumption are emerging beside ownership. While property continues to exist, it is less likely to be exchanged in the market (Rifkin 2000). Instead of buying and owning things, consumers want access to goods and prefer to pay for the experience of temporarily accessing them. Ownership is no longer the ultimate expression of consumer desire (Chen 2009; Marx 2011). Indeed, we have seen a proliferation of consumption models in which access is enabled through sharing or pooling of resources/products/services redefined through technology and peer communities (Belk 2010; Botsman and Rogers 2010; Gansky 2010; Giesler 2006). Examples of access models vary from car- or bike-sharing programs (Zipcar, Hubway) to online borrowing programs for DVDs, bags, fashion, or jewelry (Netflix, Bag Borrow or Steal, Rent the Runway, Borrowed Bling). While public access to goods, such as borrowing books from public libraries or use of public transportation, has been and continues to be the norm in some cultures and social contexts, observers argue that models of access mediated by the marketplace are gaining popularity fueled by the Internet, as well as by a capitalist marketplace trading in cultural resources rather than material objects (Botsman and Rogers 2010; Gansky 2010; Rifkin 2000). The goal of this study is to examine the nature of access-based consumption in the context of car sharing, wherein consumers temporarily gain access to cars in return for a membership fee.

We define access-based consumption as transactions that may be market mediated in which no transfer of ownership takes place. The consumer is acquiring consumption time with the item, and, in market-mediated cases of access, is willing to pay a price premium for use of that object (Durgee and O'Connor 1995). Consumers are able to access objects or networks that they could not afford to own or that they choose not to own due to concerns such as space constraints or the environment. In comparison to their owning products, consumers attain benefits by gaining the right to use products or services or enter a network on the basis of rental/access-based payments (Lovelock and Gummesson 2004).

Ownership and possession practices have historically

Fleura Bardhi (f.bardhi@neu.edu) is an associate professor of marketing in the College of Business Administration, Northeastern University, 202 Hayden Hall, 360 Huntington Ave., Boston, MA 02115. Giana M. Eckhardt (geckhardt@suffolk.edu) is an associate professor of marketing in the Sawyer Business School, Suffolk University, 8 Ashburton Place, Boston, MA 02108. Authors are listed alphabetically; both contributed equally. Thank you to Russ Belk, Maia Beruchasvilli, Eileen Fischer, and Risto Moisio for their helpful insights, as well as participants of the marketing department research seminars at York University and University of Wyoming for their comments on earlier versions of this article. The authors also thank the editors, associate editors, and reviewers for their constructive comments throughout the review process.

Mary Frances Luce and Debbie MacInnis served as editors and Søren Askegaard served as associate editor for this article.

Electronically published May 16, 2012

© The Author 2012. Published by Oxford University Press on behalf of Journal of Consumer Research, Inc.
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact journals.permissions@oup.com • Vol. 39 • December 2012
DOI: 10.1086/666376

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

been of central interest to consumer researchers. Research in alternative modes of consumption apart from ownership is limited, with pioneering studies including Belk's (2007, 2010) conceptual outline of sharing and Chen's (2009) empirical study of experiential access to art via museums and galleries. This research stream has demonstrated that the mode of consumption shapes consumers' relationship to products and services and their preferences, values, and desires. For example, Chen (2009) points out the contrast between art collectors and visitors to art museums and suggests that mode of consumption shapes consumers' perception of value. She also finds that each mode of consumption is underlined by distinct consumer desires. Moeller and Wittkowski (2010) find different consumer preferences associated with possession versus access in a peer-to-peer-sharing online network. Further, Chen (2009) and Rifkin (2000) propose that access produces a different object-self relationship compared to ownership. While the phenomenon of access-based consumption has been noted in the literature, we lack an understanding of what the nature of consumption under conditions of access looks like. In this study, we advance our understanding of access through the study of one market-mediated type: car sharing.

We provide a systematic theoretical development that integrates and extends prior work on shared resources and that compares and contrasts access systematically with modes already represented in the literature, namely, owning and sharing. We then undertake an analytical investigation into the phenomenon of access, by examining why consumers engage in car sharing; what are the processes involved; and what are the implications for consumer-object, consumer-consumer, and consumer-firm relationships. Our contribution lies in conceptualizing access-based consumption, identifying the dimensions on which various types of access consumptionscapes differ from one another, and going on to introduce the outcomes of these dimensions in the context of car sharing. In this way we advance our limited understanding of this alternative mode of consumption. Mapping a construct and its implications is deemed an especially valued and relevant theoretical contribution in the study of emerging phenomena (Fischer and Otnes 2006).

We explore these issues in the context of what is commonly known as car sharing, where consumers gain access to cars for short-term periods by paying per use. While the term "car sharing" is widely used in everyday vocabulary and in the popular press, we define it as access-based consumption rather than sharing as defined by Belk (2007, 2010). More specifically, we examine the relationships between the consumer and the accessed object, including the hedonic and symbolic identity value, the consumer-consumer relationship, and the consumer-marketer relationship. We suggest that access-based consumption is ultimately a unique form of consumption and that there is a lack of understanding about its features and complexities. We also ground our analysis in the sociocultural politics that surround consumption modes, specifically those related to the ownership ideology. We now outline our conceptual foundations, go on to describe our methods, outline the four outcomes of access-based consumption in the context of car sharing that emerged from our analysis, and finally discuss the significance of these to the evolution of consumption modes in the marketplace.

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Contrasting Access to Ownership and Sharing

Ownership expresses the special relationship between a person and an object called "owning," and the object is called "personal property" or a "possession" (Snare 1972, 200). Two of the major differences between ownership and access entail (1) the nature of the object-self relationship and (2) the rules that govern and regulate this relationship. In ownership, consumers may identify with their possessions, which can become part of their extended self (Belk 1988) and can be crucial in maintaining, displaying, and transforming the self (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995; Richins 1994; Schouten 1991). In contrast to the long-term interaction with the object that characterizes ownership, access is a temporary and circumstantial consumption context (Chen 2009). Thus, the consumer-object relationship in access-based consumption may be different from that in ownership. Additionally, in ownership, the individual has full property rights over the object that regulates the incentives and behaviors related to owned objects. The sole ownership enables freedom and responsibility toward the object with clear boundaries between self and others. The owner has the right to regulate or deny access to others; to use, sell, and retain any profits yielded from the object's use; and to transform its structure (Snare 1972). However, in access, there is no ownership of the object, and the nature and governance of consumer-object and consumer-to-consumer relationships are not well understood. We explore these in this study.

Access is similar to sharing, in that both modes of consumption do not involve a transfer of ownership. Sharing represents "the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use, and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our own use" (Belk 2007, 126). However, access and sharing differ with regard to the perceived or shared sense of ownership. Belk (2010) argues that in intrafamilial sharing, possession or ownership is joint, with no separate terms to distinguish partners. In sharing, joint possessions are free for all to use and generate no debts, and responsibilities, such as caretaking or not overusing the object, are shared. In contrast to sharing, in access there is no transfer of ownership or joint ownership; the consumer simply gains access to use an object. Additionally, access may differ from sharing in that access is not necessarily altruistic or prosocial, as sharing is (Belk 2010), but can be underlined by economic exchange and reciprocity. In market-mediated access models, the "sharing" of property can occur from the company that owns the object of consumption rather than through sharing of personal property

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

among consumers, as in sharing (Belk 2007). We explore these differences in this study.

Emergence of Access-Based Consumption

The phenomenon of access was first documented in the popular business press by Rifkin (2000), who primarily examines the business-to-business sector and argues that we are living in an age of access in which property regimes have changed to access regimes characterized by short-term limited use of assets controlled by networks of suppliers. Historically, in the consumer market, access has existed in the not-for-profit and public sphere rather than the market, as, for example, consumption of art by visitors to museums (Chen 2009) or short-term borrowing of books and toys from public libraries (Ozanne and Ballantine 2010). Access was also derived through traditional rental forms in the marketplace, such as car or apartment rentals. However, little attention has been paid to the study and understanding of access as a consumption mode.

American consumer society has been proclaimed an ownership society (Walsh 2011). Ownership has been the normative ideal among modes of consumption based on cultural values about perceived advantages of ownership over access as well as reinforcing government and market practices. Historically, ownership is perceived to be cheaper, a means to capital accumulation, and a way to provide a sense of personal independence and security (Snare 1972). Ownership also provides ontological security, "in fulfilling a deep-seated yearning of continuity and permanence in life" (Cheshire, Walters, and Rosenblatt 2010, 2599). Home ownership ideology, for example, has promoted a property-based citizenship that privileges home ownership over public and rental housing (Ronald 2008). It is embedded with rites to adulthood and bound up with discourses of choice and freedom. Thus, the owner has been elevated to a better type of citizen, neighbor, and even parent (Baker 2008; Ronald 2008).

In contrast, historically, access has been stigmatized and was seen as an inferior consumption mode (Ronald 2008). Access associated with traditional rental was seen as wasteful, precarious, and limited in individual freedom (Cheshire et al. 2010). Thus, individuals who engaged in traditional rentals were seen as feckless consumers who were misallocating their purchasing power (Rowlands and Gurney 2000). Renters do not acquire investment, pride of ownership, depreciation credits, or the sense of security typically associated with ownership. They were also perceived to have lower financial power and status or to be at a more transitory life stage, as access has been considered to be purely financially motivated (Durgee and O'Conner 1995). In the context of housing, research has found that individuals who engage in access through traditional rentals were perceived to be flawed consumers failing in three domains of social life—aesthetics, ethics, and community—by undermining the aesthetic value of the neighborhood and by failing to demonstrate an ethic of care for themselves and others (Cheshire et al. 2010).

However, during the last decade we have seen a proliferation of access systems in the marketplace that go beyond traditional forms of access. For example, access can be gained through memberships to clubs or organizations where multiple products owned by a company can be shared (Botsman and Rogers 2010). Another form of access is achieved through redistribution markets, where peer-to-peer matching services (RelayRides, AirBnB) or social networks enable used or owned goods to be redistributed where they are needed (Share Some Sugar, Freecycle, Neighborhood Goods). Finally, access is also derived through collaborative lifestyles in which "people with similar interests are banding together to share and exchange less tangible assets such as time, space, skills, and money" (Botsman and Rogers 2010, 73), such as shared worked spaces (Hub Culture), gardens (Landshare), and e-storage (Dropbox). This more recent access-based consumption differs from traditional rentals by virtue of being enabled through digital technology, being more self-service, and therefore, being more collaborative and not always mediated by the market (Botsman and Rogers 2010; Gansky 2010; Walsh 2011).

While historically access was perceived as an inferior mode of consumption, the market has indicated a shift in the sociocultural politics of consumption. During the last decade, market-mediated access has become a pervasive and increasingly important phenomenon, as companies are finding ways to monetize it. Some observers trace this transformation to the digitalization of music and Web 2.0 that enhanced the ability to share and the Napsterization that spread to all forms of media (Walsh 2011). These developments in technology enabled the organization of access-based systems viable on a daily basis. The consequence of this rise of the information and knowledge society is that value is increasingly reliant on cultural rather than tangible resources (Radka and Margolis 2011).

Moreover, ownership and attachment to things become problematic in an increasingly liquid society. Liquid modernity characterizes the current social conditions in which social structures and institutions are increasingly unstable and thus "cannot serve as frames of reference for human actions and long-term life strategies" (Bauman 2007, 1). Increasingly, institutions, people, objects, information, and places considered solid during the last century have tended to dematerialize and liquidize (Ritzer 2010). Bauman (2000) posits that, similar to liquid phenomena that do not hold shape easily or for long, consumer identity projects are also fluid, and as such, what is valued is ever changing. In contrast to the solid emotional, social, and property relations embedded in ownership, access is a more transient mode of consumption, enabling flexibility and adaptability suitable for liquid consumer identity projects. Access has emerged as a way to manage the challenges of a liquid society (Bardhi, Eckhardt, and Arnould 2012).

The popularity of access also coincides with the global economic crisis. Consumers are reexamining spending habits and rethinking their values, including the relationship between ownership and well-being. They have become more

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

mindful of spending habits and more resourceful (Communispace/Ogilvy 2011). The increase in the costs of acquiring and maintaining ownership over time, the instability in social relationships, as well as the uncertainties in the labor markets have rendered ownership a less attainable and more precarious consumption mode than it once was (Cheshire et al. 2010).

Finally, access has been especially popular in urban areas that by nature exhibit space limitations (be it parking or storage). The popularity of access coincides with a structural shift in the American urban landscape: the move toward reurbanization. Americans are moving into cities and urban-style housing in walkable neighborhoods (Leinberger 2007). With density as a major concern of the reurbanization movement, sustainable development, apartments, and condos have increased in city centers, offering alternatives to the long commutes and reliance on cars that dominate suburban living (Hsing 2009; Leinberger 2007). Living in more compact spaces in urban areas also requires a shift in ownership, with more young professionals and empty nesters now willing to pay to be closer to work, local shops, and businesses (Hsing 2009). Being able to access objects that are housed elsewhere facilitates the reurbanization movement. Now that we have outlined some of the reasons that access has come to the fore in consumption practices, we go on to identify dimensions that can be used to distinguish between various forms of access.

Dimensionalizing the Field of Access

Access covers a wide range of contextually situated consumptionscapes with unique features that structure the nature of consumption. We have identified six dimensions on which various types of access differ from one another. Specifically, access consumptionscapes vary along the dimensions of (1) temporality, (2) anonymity, (3) market mediation, (4) consumer involvement, (5) type of accessed object, and (6) political consumerism. We conceptualize these dimensions as being continua—various types of access can be situated at various points along these six dimensions.

Temporality. In contrast to the long-term interaction with an object that characterizes ownership, in access, consumption is more temporary (Chen 2009). Access consumptionscapes can vary along this dimension in two ways: duration of access and usage. First, access can be of short-term or longitudinal duration. At one end of the continuum, access can be short term, characterized by a onetime transaction, such as renting a car or a hotel room. At the other end, access can be longitudinal, where consumers have a membership in a community or club, such as in car sharing (Zipcar), movie sharing (Netflix), or a gym. In this sense, access involves serial usage of the entity, and it can be active or dormant, for example, when not using access privileges even though one continues to be a member. A second aspect of temporality is the length of object usage, which can vary from long-term use, such as in traditional car leasing in which a car is used for 1 or 2 years, to more limited use, such as hourly usage of a car in car-sharing models.

Temporal variations have implications for the nature of access-based consumption, specifically with regard to the object-consumer relationship as well as the consumer-consumer relationship. During long-term usage, consumers may develop a perceived sense of ownership to objects because the time duration allows for appropriation practices to take place (Strahilevitz and Loewenstein 1998). Consumers have a chance to come to intimately know an object, control it, and invest themselves into it through labor, even though they do not legally own the object (Belk 1988; Pierce, Kostova, and Dirks 2001). For instance, consumers may feel a sense of ownership toward their community gardens or rented apartments that they use or where they reside for a long time. Additionally, the role of other consumers in shaping the consumption experiences may be more prevalent in more longitudinal access such as community gardens. In contrast, consumers may not engage with the object or other consumers when they use accessed objects on a short-term or limited basis.

Anonymity. This dimension shapes the relationship with and behavior toward other consumers. Anonymity manifests itself in two different ways. First, access consumptionscapes can differ on interpersonal anonymity, the extent to which the context of use is private or public. In some consumptionscapes access is anonymous, as consumers want and gain exclusive access to the object of consumption, such as car sharing or hotels, and do not need or want to have interactions with other consumers accessing the same object before or after them. Thus, a clear self-to-other boundary is possible. The high level of anonymity that characterizes these consumptionscapes leads to infrequent encounters with other consumers and produces what Simmel (1950) calls a society of strangers.

In other cases, access is social, when the object is used in a public context, as in the case of public gardens, or its consumption is shared with others, such as in the case of couch surfing, where one stays in someone's home at the same time as the owner resides there. Here consumers use items that are shared by others (peer-to-peer sharing) or consume from a commons (toy libraries, gym equipment, or public gardens). The public context of consumption provides an opportunity for sharing and prosocial behavior, and access may take on the properties of sharing out, defined as sharing that takes place outside the boundaries of the extended self/family or, more specifically, that does not expand these boundaries (Belk 2010). For instance, Ozanne and Ozanne (2011, 272) argue that toy libraries represent "a model of good stewardship over finite resources," where participating consumers show clear signs of caring for the objects and others because they are sharing collective goods (see also Ozanne and Ballantine 2010). Social connections are also important and emphasized in this context, similar to Chen's (2009) finding of collective enjoyment in the context of art visitation. These studies argue that more social models of access have more prosocial motivations. Thus,

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

the concept of sharing and its theoretical framework as outlined by Belk (2010) may be relevant for these social, nonanonymous types of access.

Second, access consumptionscapes can also differ on the basis of spatial anonymity, the proximity between the object and the consumer that shapes the intimacy of the consumptionscape. Access can be motivated by convenience, when the location of the object is closer to the consumer's place of residence, which can be true for car sharing, community gardens, or peer-to-peer neighborhood sharing programs (Neighborhood Goods). This is a different experience from contexts such as traditional car rentals, where cars are accessed mainly in transportation hubs. The intimacy of the spatial context of consumption shapes the routines and practices of consuming the object (Price, Arnould, and Tierney 1995), where more habitual consumption could take place in more intimate contexts, such as regular use of the cars parked near one's house, which would not be the case in less intimate contexts. Thus, in settings closer to home, consumers may experience a sense of de facto ownership.

Market Mediation. Access consumptionscapes can also differ along varying levels of market mediation, from for profit to not for profit. Not-for-profit access-based consumption has existed in the public sphere as well as more recently outside the public sector involving peer-to-peer exchange and sharing, where consumers gain access to objects and services owned by other consumers through the use of technology (Land Share, Share Some Sugar). Other access consumptionscapes rely more heavily on market mediation and tend to be underlined by the profit motive of economic exchange. Examples include car sharing, online borrowing programs (Netflix, Rent the Runway), and home or room renting (AirBNB). The level of market mediation could shape consumer/object relationships as well as the exchange norms that guide them.

Consumer Involvement. This dimension relates to the level of consumer involvement in the consumption experience, where the consumer can have limited involvement, as in traditional rental services, such as hotels or car rentals, or have extensive involvement, such as in the case of car sharing. In the latter examples, consumer cocreation is extensive, as the consumer picks up and delivers the car, cleans the car, fills up the gas, and reports damage, all crucial elements for the success of car-sharing models. In these cases, the consumer can almost play the role of an employee (Frei 2005). The nature of the consumptionscape, from self-service to full service, can have implications for the nature of governance as well as the level of consumer commitment and identification with the accessed object.

Type of Accessed Object. Prior research suggests that the type of object being accessed also plays a role in the nature of access-based consumption. Two key distinctions are identified in this area. First, the nature of access may vary along the continuum of whether the object is experiential or functional (Chen 2009). For instance, Chen (2009) studies experiential access in museum art viewing. We study a context in which the accessed item (car) has more of a functional value. In this way, we challenge Chen's (2009) conclusion that consumers do not derive value from functional products unless they are owned.

The second distinction refers to the differences among access consumptionscapes depending on whether the object is material or of a digital materiality. In some access contexts, the object being accessed is immaterial and mostly in digital format, such as music or file sharing (Giesler 2006). Belk (2010) argued that such online contexts seem much more conducive to sharing than offline contexts. Thus, access in online contexts may be more similar to sharing, underlined by more collaborative, prosocial, and altruistic motivations than in consumptionscapes in which the accessed object is of material form.

Political Consumerism. The nature of access may also differ on the basis of the level of political consumerism. Political consumerism represents "the use of market action as an area for politics, and consumer choice as a political tool" (Micheletti, Føllesdal, and Stolle 2004, vii). We expand on this idea by arguing that some consumers use their choice of mode of consumption—ownership versus access—as a strategy to articulate and promote their ideological interests to society, business, and government. Forgoing ownership to engage in access can be a reflexive strategy of signaling access as a more environmentally sustainable or antimarket consumption alternative. For instance, access models created on the basis of grassroots community or neighborhood initiatives may be driven by ideological motives to reappropriate community or public spaces from commercialization, such as in the case of participation in community gardens (Chatzidakis, Maclaran, and Bradshaw 2012). Such politically motivated access models are seen by their creators and participants as ways to practice their citizenship outside the marketplace and contest the domination of the market over common public spaces (Visconti et al. 2010). Similarly, some bike-sharing programs may be motivated by environmental concerns and anticar ownership culture, in contrast to nonpolitically motivated access consumptionscapes formed predominantly to fill a market gap, such as Rent the Runway, Bag Borrow or Steal, or eBook rentals. Even within one context, like car sharing, politically based motivations for engaging in access may vary. The political aspect of access may shape consumer identification as well as consumer-to-consumer relationships.

In sum, the six dimensions identified above map out the evolving field of access. We would expect access-based consumption to differ depending on where a particular context of access fell on each of these six dimensions. In this study, we advance our understanding of access-based consumption in the context of car sharing, which is characterized as longitudinal, frequently dormant access of limited duration; close to home and anonymous; market mediated; self-service; and based on a more functional and material object. Thus, our context of study is distinct from Chen's (2009) context of art museum visitation, which, similar to car sharing, is characterized by limited use and longitudinal but

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

frequently dormant access and a high level of customer involvement but is different as it is based on experiential objects, it is social rather than anonymous, and it can be less market mediated. We focus on an anonymous, market-mediated context because this characterizes a new form of access-based consumption that is becoming more prevalent in the marketplace. While we have theoretical tools (Belk 2010) and empirical evidence for prosocial access-based consumption (Ozanne and Ozanne 2011), we do not yet understand anonymous, self-service, market-mediated access-based consumption.

CONTEXT OF STUDY: CAR SHARING

In the past decade, car sharing has become a worldwide phenomenon, with copious news coverage and uptake by consumers (Levine 2009; Naughton 2008). Originating in Switzerland and Germany more than 20 years ago, car sharing is a popular alternative to car ownership and has grown systematically in the United States, where the revenue from car-sharing programs is expected to be $3.3 billion in 2016, up from $253 million in 2009 (Florida 2011; Katzev 2003; Reuters 2011). In car sharing, consumers access cars owned by a company, which makes it distinct from carpooling or peer-to-peer car-sharing programs, such as RelayRides. Car sharing is one of the most high-profile access-based contexts in today's marketplace (Botsman and Rogers 2010). Further, the automobile is full of symbolism in the American cultural context. As prior research has documented, American consumers forge strong attachments to their cars (Ball and Tasaki 1992), and cars symbolize a sense of consumer identity. Owning one's first car is a rite of passage to adulthood, and often cars can be symbols of masculinity and independence. Consumers forge strong relationships with their cars, and often brand communities coalesce around this product (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Thus, the context of car sharing allows us to examine whether the symbolic and experiential benefits associated with car ownership can also be experienced in access.

Car sharing consists of a group of paying individuals who access a fleet of cars along with other paying members periodically over time. Cars are used almost exclusively for short, local trips, as the cost becomes prohibitive for longer distances. Specifically, our study is conducted with Zipcar users, the world's largest car-sharing company and the sole car-sharing company in the United States for a decade. Zipcar has become an icon of sharing among the business community (Botsman and Rogers 2010). Since its beginning in 2000, Zipcar has experienced 100%+ growth annually, and its annual revenue in 2011 was $241.6 million (http://www.zipcar.com). By the end of 2011, Zipcar had more than 650,000 members and over 8,900 cars in urban areas and college campuses throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

Essentially, Zipcar works as follows: to use Zipcar, a consumer must be at least 21 years old and become a member of Zipcar by going through a rigorous member check, which includes driving history. Members receive a Zipcard, which serves as an automatic key to unlock the door of each car, enabling members to have automated access to any Zipcar they reserve. Members can reserve Zipcars online or by phone in minutes or up to a year in advance. Rates are as low as $6 per hour and $60 per day, with gas, parking, insurance, and maintenance included.

Zipcar has around 30 car models in its fleet, from basic functional models, such as Toyota trucks, to luxury brands such as BMW, to green cars such as the Toyota Prius. Zipcars are typically located close to the user's residence or place of work and are returned to their permanent parking space at the end of the rental period. The Zipcar service is designed as a self-service model that guarantees lower costs for its members (Frei 2005). There are no employees on-site for car pickup or return. Thus, the company relies on its customers to return the cars on time, maintain the cars, and report damage. The company outlines several mechanisms to manage and monitor consumer behavior on its website. First, Zipcar has introduced what they call the "six rules of the road" in which they delineate the customer responsibilities to return the car on time, to clean the cars, to report damage, to not smoke in the car, to fill up the gas tank, and to not bring/keep pets in the car. Second, vehicle usage data are monitored for each driver. Third, Zipcar has instituted a penalty system in which customers are charged for not bringing the car back in time ($50 per late hour) as well as for any other violations of the six rules ($50 per violation). Customers are rewarded for taking the initiative to wash and clean the cars themselves ($15 reward; see also Frei 2005).

In addition to these instrumental control mechanisms, Zipcar has attempted to use the power of normative controls to manage its customers by trying to establish a brand community (Frei 2005). For example, the company makes sure that all its customers know that they are members of a community, by sending a monthly newsletter via e-mail to its members, organizing gatherings or events in each city, and engaging its customers in feedback as well as competitions such as name a car (each car is given a human name beginning with the first letter of the model name: Mia Mini). Further, Zipcar has positioned itself as a green brand by promoting car sharing as a more sustainable driving practice, pricing hybrid and electric cars lower than other car models, and being eligible for tax reductions in some US states. In sum, Zipcar positions its brand as young, innovative, and green.

METHOD

We conducted 40 semistructured interviews with a purposive sample of Zipcar users located in Boston, where Zipcar has become commonplace. Zipcar users are typically characterized as young, professional, and urban (Frei 2005; Levine 2009). As such, we sampled along these dimensions. Table 1 provides a summary of our informants. Our sample consists of an almost equal distribution of men and women, 17 of whom are between 21 and 23 years old and 23 of whom are between 24 and 38 years old. Twenty-five of our informants represent urban professionals, while the rest of

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

TABLE 1

INFORMANT DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Name	Age	Profession	Car owner	Relationship status	Income ($)
Adam	22	Student	Yes	Single	<20,000
April	23	Student	No	Single	<20,000
Alex	23	Student	Yes	Single	<20,000
Alex O.	24	Employed (sales)	Yes	Single	20,000–50,000
Brian	23	Employed (real estate agent)	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Brittany	22	Student	No	Single	<20,000
Charlene	24	Employed (teacher)	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Chris	22	Student	Yes	Single	<20,000
Dave	25	Employed (photographer)	Yes	Single	<20,000
David	24	Employed (research)	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Diego	28	Employed	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Elizabeth	21	Student	Yes	Single	<20,000
Emily	23	Employed (environmental engineer)	Yes	Single	20,000–50,000
Erica	30	Employed (hair stylist)	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Jaclyn	22	Student	Yes	Single	20,000–50,000
Jason	22	Student	Yes	Single	<20,000
Jennifer	32	Employed (director)	No	Single	51,000–80,000
John	25	Employed (actor)	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Joe	24	Employed	No	Single	<20,000
Kenneth	22	Student	No	Single	<20,000
Krishna	22	Student	No	Single	<20,000
Laura K.	37	Employed (VP of operations for beverage company)	Yes	Single	NA
Laura S.	23	Student	No	Single	<20,000
Mariella	24	Student	No	Married	<20,000
Reese	25	Employed (account coordinator)	No	Cohabiting	20,000–50,000
Meissner	22	Student	No	Single	<20,000
Mike	22	Unemployed	Yes	Single	<20,000
Jessica	26	Employed (waitress)	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Priscilla	21	Student	No	Single	<20,000
Scott	27	Employed (musician)	No	Single	<20,000
Shane	24	Employed (public relations)	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Tim	31	Employed	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Chuck	21	Student	No	Single	<20,000
Steve	27	Employed (educator)	No	Single	151,000–250,000
Ashley	33	Employed	Yes	Single	20,000–50,000
Rebecca	25	Employed (consultant)	No	Single	51,000–80,000
Lisa	28	Employed (program coordinator)	Yes	Single	20,000–50,000
Rachel	37	Unemployed	Yes	Married	20,000–50,000
Bob	32	Employed (office manager)	No	Single	20,000–50,000
Nancy	26	Employed (education administrator)	No	Cohabiting	51,000–80,000

the sample consists of university students. Thus, the majority of our sample is single and lives alone, with 14 of them owning a car of their own while using Zipcar. We checked for any systematic differences between the student and working-professional segments of our sample and did not find any.

Beyond the demographic variables, there is other heterogeneity within our sample. For example, some of our respondents have never owned a car, while some of them are using Zipcar during a period when they temporarily do not have access to their own cars. Almost all of them aspire to have their own cars. Although we expected to find consumers who were actively rejecting car ownership for ideological reasons, this was not the case within our sample.

We began data collection through nonparticipant observation of car sharing. We rode in Zipcars with members, which enabled us to gain a firsthand understanding of how consumers use Zipcars, conduct transactions, follow company regulations, and relate to other users and to the company. These observational data, as well as immersion in the literature on ownership and sharing, guided the construction of the interview guide (Bernard 2002; McCracken 1988). In the interviews, we focused on consumer motivations for joining car sharing, relationships with the car, similarities and differences between Zipcars and owned cars, behavior with Zipcars, as well as feelings about belonging to a car-sharing network and toward the Zipcar brand. The interviews lasted an hour, on average.

We conducted a hermeneutic, iterative analysis (Spiggle 1994; Thompson 1997) of the interview data, with the purpose of identifying how access-based consumption was being enacted. In the first phase of data analysis, we each read the individual interview transcripts to identify consumer motivations and relationships to Zipcars and to the brand for each informant. In the second phase, the emphasis was placed on cross-case analysis among informants in which

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

we followed a grounded-theory approach to identify emerging codes and categories relevant to the concept under development (Fischer and Otnes 2006). As we were concerned with the nature of the construct, an important step in the analysis was to identify outcomes of access as they emerged in our data (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

In addition to the interview data, we conducted analyses of company secondary data, including Zipcar promotional material, newsletters, videos posted on the Zipcar website, and interactions with customers through the Zipcar Facebook page. These additional data allowed us to examine how Zipcar is trying to promote the idea of car sharing to its members, potential members, and investors, as well as to triangulate our interview data (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). As we illustrate in our findings, consumers' perspectives are contrasted with company brand positioning and governance mechanisms. Ultimately, we arrived at four outcomes of car sharing, which we elaborate on next.

THE NATURE OF CAR SHARING

We find that the types of behaviors occurring in access-based consumption in a car sharing-context divide resources among discrete economic interests—the company and the consumers—and preserve the self/other boundary. The type of consumption we uncover is not motivated by altruistic concerns. Our analysis identifies four outcomes of car sharing that are a result of the placement of car sharing across the six dimensions of access-based consumption. These outcomes are a lack of identification with the accessed objects; that use value dominates the relationship with the objects, but sign value emerges in the act of accessing; that consumption is regulated by the market's norms of negative reciprocity, and the governance mechanism consists of a big-brother model; and the deterrence of brand community, despite the company's efforts to build one. We also point out how the nature of car-sharing consumption is shaped by the sociocultural context of our informants as well as the more macro politics of consumption that surrounds ownership and access.

Avoiding Identification

Prior research has shown that consumers develop a perceived sense of ownership of an object, even when the objects are not owned. Perceived ownership is a feeling that something is "mine," without the individual actually owning the product (Peck and Shu 2009; Pierce et al. 2001). For example, research has demonstrated that consumers incorporate products into the extended self and feel a sense of perceived ownership through simply touching them (Peck and Shu 2009), appropriating or controlling them, creating them, or getting to know them (Belk 1988; Pierce et al. 2001). Similarly Belk (2010) proposes that consumers experience a de facto shared sense of ownership over shared objects. These findings would suggest that in access, consumers may experience a sense of perceived ownership, even though no transfer of ownership is involved.

Indeed, Zipcar has attempted to encourage consumers to do just that. For instance, in efforts to encourage personalization of the cars, Zipcar engages users in online forums, such as Facebook, in competitions to name its cars and uses the human names given to the cars in the booking form for the users (one books the Mia Mini rather than the 2002 Mini Cooper located at the intersection of High and Main Streets). Additionally, as cars are located around one's house or work, our informants tend to habitually use the same cars parked near them, so they have the opportunity to feel proprietary toward the cars they use most often. However, we did not find a sense of identification with the Zipcars. As Brian narrates, the car is jointly used, thus not his: "I really don't care [about the car]. I know that it's a shared car. I get a little grossed out because people have smoked cigarettes in the car. There is nothing like owning my own car! I know that it's not my own car. I know that it's a communal car, and I know what I'm expecting which is why the cigarette smoke is OK. A communal car is shared and it's not my car" (Brian).

Brian discusses practices of other Zipcar users that he does not like, such as smoking, but he is willing to put up with because he feels no shared sense of ownership of the car. He disassociates himself from other users because they smoke, as he does not identify with an accessed car. Sharing the car with others reinforces, in this case, the sense of "It is not mine" and diminishes any obligations of object stewardship or expectations of others that come with perceived ownership of the car. Brian testifies to the existence of normative ideals on forms of car consumption in which ownership is valued higher than access (Allen 2008; Walsh 2011). Thus, Brian looks down on "communal" cars, and access cannot satisfy Brian's expectations of car consumption.

Brian points out that sharing a car with others raises concerns of contagion, when he describes being grossed out by some members breaking the nonsmoking ban in Zipcars. Contagion refers to disgust that consumers feel when they are aware that an object has been physically touched by someone else (Argo, Dahl, and Morales 2006; Rozin and Fallon 1987). Contagion typically manifests itself when the other is an unknown person. This is in contrast to a lack of fear of contagion that is characteristic of sharing in the context of familial relationships based on trust and open self-boundaries (Belk and Llamas 2011). As Brian notes above, fear of contagion distances Zipcar users from the cars.

In our context of study, cars are used privately, and as such, anonymity of consumption is important as articulated below in Ashley's comparison with hotels. To eliminate the negative effects of contagion, Zipcar attempts to establish boundaries between users by periodically maintaining the cars and preaches responsible sharing, as explained in its "six rules of the road" and its fining practices (Frei 2005). However, as Ashley points out, these efforts further alienate Zipcar users from appropriation or stewardship toward the car and one another:

> I know that they have this perception, they try to create an atmosphere of it's your car. I don't really have any connection

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

> to it. Zipcars are sort of like hotel rooms: they're clean, anonymous, and comfortable but not really cozy. It's like a hotel room kind of experience, where you're in some place that's really not yours; you're never going to be really comfortable. You're not that worried about getting the seat perfect because you're only driving it for one day. You don't fiddle with the presets of the radio, they're on stations I don't like, or you don't have your CD's in the car. It's not the same sort of cozy intimate feel you have with like your own car where you've developed a relationship to it. It's a nice car, they're great, they're in good condition, they're clean and everything, but, they're sort of like a hotel room where you're going to use it once. (Ashley L.)

As Ashley indicates, Zipcar users do not engage in appropriation practices that incorporate the car into the extended self as illustrated in other consumption contexts (Belk 1988; Tian and Belk 2005), such as personalizing the car seat or the radio stations or bringing personal items in the car. Informants do not identify with the Zipcars. Her narrative points out that because the duration of use of cars under our context of access is temporary rather than long term, our informants are not motivated to appropriate the cars and do not feel a sense of ownership.

Moreover, Ashley points at the alienating effects of market-mediated access. Similar to other services like hotel rooms, the relationship to the shared cars is one of instrumental utility rather than connection. Douglas (1991) argues out that hotel rooms have this type of utility—as opposed to the connection of those sharing a home—because it is based on the principle of market exchange rather than sharing. Similarly, as Ashley points out, informants are not attached to the car, as Zipcar is a system based on market exchange. Mike reaffirms this by using examples of practices he engages in, which Belk and Llamas (2011) characterize as negative sharing, because he feels no sense of perceived ownership: "I'll double park a Zipcar real quick if I'm just running into Starbuck's or something. Which I wouldn't want do with my car. Or, I'll parallel a Zipcar in a tighter spot than I would with mine because it's not mine. I'm just not worried about it. When I'm driving a Zipcar, it's like any other service that you do. It's convenient. Like if I'm in a restaurant, I don't think I own the kitchen. If I'm in a Zipcar I don't feel like I own the car, I'm just using the service" (Mike). As this quote illustrates, the care and stewardship that is directed toward owned cars or found toward shared items (e.g., Ozanne and Ozanne 2011) is absent when Zipcar users abuse the cars and behave opportunistically. Further, Mike's experience outlines that a good can be experienced as a service when market exchange dominates. Rifkin (2000) describes the market exchange relationship as one in which "traditional reciprocal obligations and expectations . . . are replaced by contractual relationships" (9). These contractual relationships inhibit the attachment and the connections to the extended self. We can see from Mike's quote the self-interest that is exhibited toward accessed objects.

In sum, while we expected our informants to incorporate accessed cars into their extended selves, we found the opposite. We show how three of the dimensions of access, specifically short-term temporal duration, anonymity, and market mediation, inhibit a sense of identification with the item used. Additionally, the high level of consumer involvement as well as the intimacy provided by the spatial proximity did not foster a sense of identification. Further, this lack of identification takes place within a larger context of the politics of consumption in which car ownership continues to be valued more than access.

The Varying Significance of Use and Sign Value

Consumer research has established the salience of ownership in consumer culture by pointing out that possessions, especially cars, carry important experiential and symbolic value for the owner. However, as Zipcar users do not feel a sense of shared or individual ownership toward, and lack identification with, the cars they access, the value they derive from such consumption behavior is unclear. To try and understand this, we asked Zipcar users to elaborate on their relationship to Zipcars as well as the practice of car sharing. The consumer-object relationship in our context of access is underlined by utilitarianism. While Zipcar uses environmentalism, sustainability, communitas, and brand affinity heavily in its marketing approach, our informants mostly discuss consumption motivations such as reducing expenses and increasing convenience as the primary reasons for their participation in the car-sharing program. That is, they want to access cars because it increases their own personal utility, rather than because it contributes to a collective utility, like reducing global warming, for example. This is in line with Hardin's (1968) characterization of the tragedy of the commons, in that individual utility is more important to individuals than is collective utility when resources are shared. As Alex and Rachel explain, "I would try and find the cheapest car I could get. So, I would usually try and find either a hybrid since those are $7 an hour or one that had an advertising sticker on it" (Alex). "I always try to get the [Toyota] Prius because it's the cheapest. I don't care what kind a car I drive, as long as it gets me from point A to point B. You do feel a little bit better about the environmental factor, but mainly it's because it's $7 an hour versus $9.25 an hour. When it comes down to it, it's just a matter of money. More people get Zipcar because it's convenient than because they're giving up their carbon footprint" (Rachel).

Hybrid cars have the lowest price in the Zipcar system, as a way for the company to promote "green driving"; however, as Alex points out, members use this as an opportunity to get a cheaper deal, rather than being politically motivated. Utilitarianism, expressed by convenience and savings, was predominant throughout our data and the context of car sharing. This echoes Devinney, Auger, and Eckhardt's (2010) findings that economic concerns outweigh ethical concerns in most consumption situations. Guided by prior work on consumers' attachment to cars, we also probed informants on their experiential and symbolic motivations

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

using Zipcars. However, we found that in contrast to the hedonic experiences with cars that past research has identified for car aficionados (Askegaard 2010), these experiences were not common in our data, as functionality is privileged in our context. As Rebecca stresses, the relationship to Zipcars is predominantly utilitarian:

> I'd say most of my experiences with Zipcar are really not very memorable. I don't know there's anything that you can really talk about that's like oh my God, it's the greatest experience driving. You know the relationship I have is, I need a vehicle I need to get from A to B, or I have a job. It's very utilitarian, like using a wrench. I wouldn't be like oh my God, this is the best wrench ever. It just does a job, it gets it done perfect, that's what I need it to do. But, it doesn't wow me or anything. It's not like girls run up to me like oh my God, you're a Zipcar owner, let me talk to you, you know. (Rebecca)

Rebecca's narrative is in contrast to findings of prior research on the hedonic value of owning a car, as well as Chen's (2009) finding that hedonic aspects are at the center of perceived value derived under conditions of experiential access. For Rebecca, the relationship to the accessed car is that of functionality.

In contrast to Belk (2010), who proposes caring and love as the motivations behind sharing, even outside of families, we find that self-serving motivations drive access-based consumption. Thus, motivations for access in our context are more comparable to those that Belk (2010) identified for commodities or gift exchange. Our data suggest that use value, the utilitarian value of the function that a material object can perform (Marx 1930), underlines the relationships consumers have with products that they access through market mediation. As shown in the first theme, our informants avoid identification with accessed cars and as such do not engage in practices that would transform their use value to sign value. However, in a more macro analysis of the discourses that surround use value in contemporary consumer culture, Baudrillard (1981) has indicated that use value, utility, and functionality have themselves become part of the reflexive symbolic repertoire of things in consumer culture. That is, use value can in and of itself gain symbolic value within a sociocultural milieu. Interestingly, in our context, the relationship between the consumer and the object is utilitarian, but the practice of access has gained sign value in the society at large.

As discussed earlier, the stigmatization of traditional rental has shifted, and access has emerged as a cool, trendy, hip, green consumption alternative to ownership (e.g., Botsman and Rogers 2010; Gansky 2010). This is also reflected in Zipcar's branding activities, which promote not only its own brand but car sharing and access society in general. Zipcar clearly positions car sharing in contrast to ownership as a more hip and economically viable consumption model for consumers in the know (Levine 2009). We find that these politics of consumption underline our informants' motivations for participating in car sharing. Adam, for instance, proudly talks about participating in car sharing: "I felt a lot smarter than people who own cars in D.C., because I saw what they had to go through, like, a parking ticket's a hundred dollars. . . . Parking itself cost around $150 a month; gas was $4 a gallon. I saved so much money by not owning a car. I don't think owning a car would bring me any more happiness" (Adam). Participating in car sharing is used by Adam as a symbolic resource to establish his identity as a smart consumer because car sharing ends up being cheaper than owning a car, an argument also made by Zipcar and outlined in their website. Within a liquid society and an urban subculture in which flexibility, freedom, and practicality are valued (Bauman 2000; Levine 2009), car sharing enables Adam to differentiate himself from owners of vehicles that entail many liabilities. Young, urban consumers like Adam see access as a cheaper, more convenient, and more flexible option than car ownership. Additionally, Adam's low economic capital situation, as a student currently living in a dense and expensive urban area, makes such short-term, flexible, access-based consumption models more valued. Thus, being a savvy consumer through savings and a focus on the functionality of consumption enabled by access carries symbolic capital in contemporary consumer culture.

In addition to the above cultural values associated with access, we also find that car sharing emerges as a lifestyle facilitator (Bernthal, Crockett, and Rose 2005) because it enables consumers to participate in lifestyle spaces that they could not otherwise. For example, our informants talked of the lifestyle freedom experienced because car sharing allows them to experiment and try different or new car models that they would not have a chance to otherwise, as for Chuck: "It was funny because I got to test drive a lot a different cars. Like, I would be surprised sometimes that I would like a car that seemed like it would suck, like a *Honda Fit*. But you'd get in it, and it'd be like, it's actually a lovely car" (Chuck). "The best thing about Zipcar is that you can get any kind of car you want. So, if you're helping someone move, you can get a pickup truck. If you feel like driving around, you can rent a little Mini Cooper convertible. . . . I can go to places I couldn't get to on the T [subway], or if I was going to carry a lot of things" (Rebecca). Rebecca takes the idea of freedom highlighted by Chuck further as she emphasizes how car sharing has transferred a durable good such as a car that, when owned, is considered a long-term investment that defines consumer identity and lifestyle to a flexible lifestyle accessory. Access enables consumers like Rebecca to pursue their postmodern identity projects as she exchanges car models according to her lifestyle needs (Firat and Venkantesh 1995). Thus, access liberates consumers from restrictions associated with ownership geared toward singular identity positions.

Our data suggest that although the Zipcars themselves are valued because of their use value, the practice of access is gaining sign value, with the sign value being a more economically savvy and more flexible form of consumption than ownership. These symbolic associations with access

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

demonstrate that use value has been turned into sign value and how that sign value is played out in the marketplace (Baudrillard 1981). The positive nature of the sign value associated with car sharing runs counter to the well-ingrained cultural values regarding the perceived advantages of car ownership that imbue ownership with symbolic capital at the expense of other modes of consumption in American society (McIntyre and McKee 2008). The emerging cultural values of thriftiness and convenience, as well as the freedom and flexibility associated with access, highlight the politics of consumption in contemporary consumer society. Now that we have looked at the consumers' relationship to the objects being accessed, we turn to examining their relationships with fellow consumers and the company.

Negative Reciprocity and Big-Brother Governance

Sahlins (1972) suggests that there are three types of reciprocity that can emerge when humans exchange objects: generalized reciprocity, in which there is no expectation of receiving anything in return; balanced, or tit-for-tat, reciprocity, in which goods and services are exchanged with an expectation that an equal return will be forthcoming; and negative reciprocity, in which goods and services are exchanged, but only in one's self interest, and typically only one side benefits from this type of exchange. Generalized reciprocity tends to take place within groups with high levels of trust, such as family, and is closely connected to the construct of sharing (Belk 2010). Tit-for-tat reciprocity tends to represent the open marketplace, where goods are exchanged for their fair market value. Negative reciprocity tends to represent the case chronicled by Hardin (1968) in his conceptualization of the tragedy of the commons, whereby individuals act with communal goods only in their own self-interest. In terms of Zipcar users' interactions with one another, our data reveal that negative reciprocity is strongly represented. That is, they acted in their own self-interest and assumed that others were doing the same. The following narrative is representative of this view. "You can just beat the hell out of it; it's not your car. Like, I don't have to think about changing the oil; I don't have to care whether or not the tires are flat. I don't care about any of it; it's not my car. And you know some magic car fairy will come and fix whatever is not right with it later. So if I destroy the suspension, so be it! Somebody will fix it. Not me" (Chuck). Chuck articulates his negative reciprocity to the object itself (the car) as well as to the company. Consumers are disengaged from carrying out their responsibility to the car and to the others using the Zipcar service. There is no thought toward how "beating the hell out of" the car will affect the next person to use the car. As Chuck points out, the "magic car fairy" has the responsibility to manage the shared resources, while Zipcar users have to watch out and protect their own interest.

The monitoring and instrumental control mechanisms put in place by Zipcar to control and manage consumer behavior are seen as something positive by our informants. For example, although users who drop off the car late are fined by Zipcar, Rachel wants the company to do something for the person who was left waiting:

> *Interviewer:* So what about if you're inconvenienced by the car not being ready for you?
>
> *Rachel:* Well, that was definitely something I was really disappointed in. They just, they let me take another car for the same price of the Prius, which I think was a more expensive car. It was just like well, there's nothing we can do for you. That's not how we operate. We operate based on people are responsible to return their car on time, and it's not our fault that it's not there. Well, how are you going to have that person whose fault it is compensate me? That doesn't happen.

Rachel sees Zipcar's role as enforcing reciprocity on the users. That is, if someone is late bringing back the car and cuts into Rachel's booked time with the car, she expects compensation from the Zipcar user, not just access to another car from Zipcar. She acknowledges that Zipcar does not enforce this type of interpersonal reciprocity but thinks that they should, again reinforcing the notion that Zipcar users assume others will only have their own self-interest at heart. The regulatory role of the company may in fact have freed Zipcar users of any responsibility toward one another and the cars, which in turn has socialized them into a system of negative reciprocity, self-destructive to any collaborative efforts. The following sentiments illustrate this: "I always feverishly check to make sure I don't lose anything when I deliver the car" (Chris). "I found a GPS system in the car once and I just left it there" (David). "People leave stuff in them all the time. I've got so many free umbrellas from Zipcar (laughs). It's great!" (Mike). Zipcar users act opportunistically themselves (not giving the GPS to the lost and found; essentially stealing umbrellas from others who have left them) and expect others will do the same (not leaving anything behind because you know no one will turn it into lost and found). There is no sense of mutual responsibility toward others, which we explain by the fact that the access experience is mediated by Zipcar. Our data suggest that the high level of market mediation, limited duration of use, and high level of self-service foster this negative reciprocity.

Given Zipcar users' desire for Zipcar to assume a regulatory role, Zipcar takes on the responsibility of managing this negative reciprocity via a surveillance-based governance model. The negative reciprocity needs to be regulated via command control rather than shared control, to ensure it works properly. Zipcar users have to rely on one another to bring the cars back on time, clean up the cars, and fill up the gas tank, in order for the system to work. Given the negative reciprocity that seems to be embedded in the system, managing the system presents challenges similar to managing shared resources in Hardin's (1968) conceptualization of the commons. Shultz and Holbrook (1999) offer four ways in which to control and manage the commons. These are regulation, organization, social responsibility, and communications. We have seen that Zipcar has attempted to use normative controls, such as social responsibility and

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

communications (inculcation of altruistic values), but these methods have not been successful with our informants. Our data suggest that the method that is successful among Zipcar users is regulation. Regulation includes instrumental controls, such as cost/benefit incentives through taxes, fees, or prices (Shultz and Holbrook 1999). As Nancy describes, informants follow the rules Zipcar has established, not because of altruistic or community-based reasons but rather because of the surveillance that Zipcar engages in. "I notice the gas level, because you get fined if you leave it underneath a quarter tank. But if it's at a quarter tank, that's for the next person" (Nancy).

Nancy fills the gas tank before bringing the car back because of the fines in place. There is no mention of the consequences that her actions could have on the next driver. Rebecca echoes this idea, in that she will follow the rules, but only to the extent that she will not get fined:

> *Interviewer:* Have you ever used the Zipcar card to fill your personal car's gas tank?
>
> *Rachel:* No. . . . I know that they track it. I think that if you were to do it, potentially you would get caught, depending on how much is in there. 'Cause they track it with the, you know, how much, how many miles it is. And you put in your own ID number. So they know when you're taking it, when you're putting gas in it.

Essentially, Zipcar adopts a big-brother governance model to regulate the system, and our informants report that it does indeed induce them to behave in a manner conducive to the well-being of the larger group rather than just themselves. In fact, our informants emphasized that they felt this regulation was necessary and that they did not resent the big-brother presence of Zipcar at all but felt others would take advantage of them if the enforcement was not there. That is, they experience Zipcar's oversight of their actions as desirable. This supports McGrath's (2004) contention that we have much to gain from being surveilled. McGrath (2004) posits that we desire and enjoy being surveilled, and as a way of regulating car sharing, our informants do exhibit this tendency. "Zipcar tracks you. And it's kind of cool. It's very state of the art I feel" (Lisa). "Because Zipcar does such an extensive background check on you, like you have to fill out your information, driver license information and, I think in general, maybe the integrity is higher in the Zipcar community than average. Otherwise, there will be just people stealing cars with keys just locked in there, in visible sight of the window" (David).

Our informants see the monitoring and regulatory role of the company as what is needed to ensure the system works. They anticipate the system breaking down without the big-brother role of Zipcar. In other words, our data suggest that market control is seen as a necessary device for car sharing. Pridmore (forthcoming) calls this type of consumer surveillance collaborative surveillance, meaning that consumers participate willingly in it, in collaboration with the company doing the surveilling. Although collaborative surveillance has been conceptualized in the literature, we provide empirical support to the notion that consumers are readily assenting and even requesting to be surveilled. Surveillance is seen as necessary for regulating negative reciprocity.

The dimension of market mediation as well as the high level of self-service and the longitudinal but transactional nature of car sharing emerged as necessitating the regulatory system. We now identify an aspect that emerges in car sharing: lack of brand community.

Deterrence of Brand Community

A distinguishing characteristic of car sharing is the interdependency between participating consumers, demonstrating a high level of consumer involvement. Consumers not only share use of the cars with others, but they are also responsible for bringing the car back on time, maintaining it, and filling it with gas, so that the next passenger can have a positive experience. In other words, consumers need to cocreate the service outcomes not only with the company but with one another. In consumption contexts in which the outcome depends on collaboration, Belk (2010) suggests that communal links between participating individuals should be facilitated. In contrast to this, and in contrast to Shultz and Holbrook's (1999) recommendation to use community building to control shared resources, we find that our informants do not have or want to have communal links with the company or with one another. There is a distinct lack of community among Zipcar users, even though the company is attempting to build one. Our informants do not relate to the brand as much as they do to the attributes of the offerings. They also do not feel a connection to other Zipcar users. "I get e-mails from them [Zipcar] and I just delete them. I don't bother reading them. Why would I? It doesn't change what I use Zipcar for" (Rachel). "You see the people in the parking lot, but I don't feel like an attachment to them as being another person using a service I'm using" (Mike). "I forgot a pea coat of mine, which was a family heirloom. And I put a listing up on the Zipcar message board for that, and no one ever responded" (Alex).

Informants see Zipcar as a service provider as well as the enforcer and governing body, rather than as a facilitator of a brand that helps them to connect to like-minded people. As indicated by Rachel and Mike, Zipcar users do not really have an interest in meeting and socializing with other users and ignore or resist Zipcar's efforts to build a community, by deleting the newsletters Rachel refers to and ignoring the other users Mike sees in the parking lot. The lack of response to Alex's message board posting reinforces this alienation that users have from one another. As outlined earlier, fear of contagion and negative reciprocity reinforces self-boundaries rather than motivates or invites consumers to extend their self through participation in a community of car sharing. This is in contrast to Giesler (2006), who found that music consumers who engaged in peer-to-peer file sharing did indeed feel obligations and expectations that came along with sharing the same object (a music file), such as the obligation to contribute to the community, not just take from the community. This reciprocity norm is typical of gift-

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

giving systems such as the one that Giesler (2006) outlines, but as we demonstrate, in car sharing, the negative reciprocity differs starkly from the gift-giving ethos.

Our data suggest that the lack of a sense of caring or altruism associated with negative reciprocity among Zipcar users further inhibits motivations to relate to others.

> *Joe:* The Beamer [BMW] has a small little thing that says Zipcar on the back of it. Most people won't notice, but still a chance. And, then, the other cars have it like written on, the entire side of it says Zipcar. It makes you feel you're really cheap when you're driving around with those.
>
> *Interviewer:* Is that something that appeals to you about the Beamer, the fact that it's not plastered with Zipcar logos all over it?
>
> *Joe:* Yeah, definitely.

"I get a bit like a feeling of embarrassment a little, because they plaster the Zipcar stickers all over the car, and it's like, that's how they do their advertising, and I just . . . I feel a little bit kind of embarrassed" (Priscilla).

Zipcar users do not feel the pride of being part of a brand community like we have seen with other brands (Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry 2003; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). As Priscilla and Joe articulate, they are actually embarrassed to be seen being connected to the Zipcar brand in public. In addition to having the brand on the cars, Zipcar tries to get Zipsters to wave to one another on the road; they are attempting to create rituals and traditions, which have been identified as a keystone of brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). To that end, having the Zipcar logo on the cars is meant to facilitate community, yet it causes embarrassment.

It is interesting to contrast Joe and Priscilla's narratives surrounding feeling cheap and embarrassed when identified with the Zipcar brand to earlier narratives we saw, such as Adam's, in which our informants were proud to participate in a car-sharing program as a more thrifty, flexible, and free alternative to ownership. The difference is that consumers are proud to be associated with Zipcar when the point of reference is the act of accessing cars, but when it comes down to individual cars, the sign value is lost. Furthermore, while access is gaining in symbolic capital, ownership still remains the ideal normative mode of car consumption in American society, and thus there is still embarrassment about not being a car owner and being revealed as such from the Zipcar logo, as for Joe and Priscilla. For them, the stigmatization that is associated with traditional forms of access such as car rentals has not fully been eliminated. However, for others such as Adam, the inferiority of access has shifted and now has a positive sign value.

The embarrassment associated with the Zipcar brand is in contrast to other car brands such as Harley Davidson or the Volkswagen (VW) Beetle (Brown et al. 2003; Schouten and McAlexander 1995), which have been well documented in the brand community literature as being able to bond their consumers together. In car sharing, consumers are part of a network on the basis of the membership fees they pay. One of the ways in which Zipcar tries to foster this network is to rally its users around the "green" advantages of using car sharing. Similar to the newsletters that get deleted, the meet ups that go unattended, the brands that cause embarrassment, and the lack of Zipster waves on the highway, our informants are not buying into the green discourse to foster community. "Zipcar is trying to jump on the green bandwagon, being good for the environment. It's more of a marketing ploy; anybody can say they're ecofriendly. I mean, heck, Chevron has all these commercials about how they're environmentally sound, and they're the fricking problem" (Rachel). "I'll keep on using Zipcar until I get a real—my own car. Hopefully that'll be sooner rather than later" (Meissner).

We can get a sense of some of the reasons why there are tensions in building a band community in car-sharing contexts from Rachel and Meissner's comments. The company's motives are constantly being questioned, similar to how we saw other user's motives were being questioned. And access rather than ownership is seen as a temporary state. Product usage among strangers, lack of symbolic value in accessed items, and negative reciprocity do not lend themselves to consumers wanting to invest identity-building resources into a community. In access, even when consumption surrounds such a highly symbolic product as cars, we do not see desire for community among users. This interpretation is bolstered by Arsel and Dobscha's (2011) finding that within the Freecycling context, which is sharing unwanted goods with strangers, there is also a lack of community. In other words, it is not just that Zipcar has used an inadequate or inappropriate means to try to create community but rather that the structures underpinning car sharing that surface in our data as well as the Freecycle context are driving the lack of brand community.

In sum, the context of car sharing is less extreme in terms of anonymity and consumer collaboration when compared to other access contexts such as online-borrowing programs (e.g., Netflix), where no consumer collaboration or contact is expected or required. In many ways Zipcar users seem to be like-minded people, and the act of access produces sign value that could serve to unite them in a community. However, we find a lack of brand community among our informants, as we do not find traces of the three defining core elements of brand community identified in prior research: specifically, conscious of a kind, shared rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). What we see, however, is that the contagion/disgust factor along with negative reciprocity serve to separate them. Holt (2004) chronicles how the VW Beetle car brand came to unite a community of nonconformists when the car was first introduced in the United States, mainly via its advertising campaign. While Zipcar has—or wants to have—a similar nonmainstream positioning, it is not serving to unite a community of green-minded consumers as the company would hope. Again, we attribute this to the outcomes previously identified in our findings, all of which distinguish accessing a car from owning a car, and thus we

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

can see why there are not as many similarities between Zipcar and VW as one would expect given the similarities of their brand messages.

To summarize our findings, we outline four outcomes of access-based consumption in the context of car sharing—(1) lack of identification, (2) varying significance of use and sign value, (3) negative reciprocity and big-brother style governance mechanisms, and (4) the deterrence of brand community. We now expand on the significance of these outcomes for understanding marketplace exchange.

DISCUSSION

Access-based consumption has been an important trend in the last decade in the consumer markets; however, the state of knowledge and research on the topic remains scarce. Ownership historically has been the dominant mode of consumption examined in consumer research as well as the normative ideal in the American society. This study conceptualizes access-based consumption, outlines its dimension, distinguishes it from other modes of consumption (sharing and ownership), identifies the nature of access for a particular case of access situated within these dimensions, and proposes potential relationships for future investigation. Additionally, the conceptualization of access-based consumption developed here contributes to the ongoing conversation about forms of exchange, by providing a framework that systematically compares and contrasts nonownership forms of consumption and their implications about consumer-object, consumer-consumer, and consumer-firm relationships. Recent research has started to unfold alternative modes of consumption to ownership, such as sharing and experiential access, but nonownership modes of consumption are presented as collaborative and prosocial, altruistic and environmentally sustainable, or experiential consumption alternatives (Belk 2007, 2010; Botsman and Rogers 2010; Chen 2009; Gansky 2010; Ozanne and Ozanne 2011). However, as our findings illustrate, some types of access-based consumption do not necessarily exhibit these qualities. Our study sheds light on the diversity of access-based consumption and challenges the preexisting romanticized view on access.

More specifically, this study advances current understandings of the nature of access-based consumption, by conceptually defining it and outlining its six dimensions: (1) temporality, (2) anonymity, (3) market mediation, (4) consumer involvement, (5) type of accessed object, and (6) political consumerism. We demonstrate that these dimensions are consequential to the nature of consumption as we empirically identify the outcomes of car sharing, a particular form of access, characterized as longitudinal, frequently dormant access of limited duration; close to home and anonymous; market mediated; self-service; based on a more functional and material object; and nonpolitically motivated.

We find four outcomes of access-based consumption in car sharing. First, consumers do not experience perceived ownership and avoid identification with the accessed object of consumption. In access consumptionscapes where anonymity is valued, the shared use of objects with strangers leads to experiences of contagion, which inhibits the extension of the self into the accessed object or toward the other users. Furthermore, the limited access of the object and the market mediation inhibits appropriation practices from taking place. Second, the predominant object-self relationship is that of use value. Counter to the altruistic discourses that underline sharing (Belk 2010) or the hedonic value of imagination, sharing, and excitement found in the experiential access of art (Chen 2009), we find that car sharing is similar to market exchange in the sense that it is motivated largely by self-interest and utilitarianism. These first two outcomes speak to a different consumer-object relationship in the type of access consumptionscapes characterized by temporal, spatial, and political consumerism orientations similar to those in car sharing than in ownership or sharing as well as other access types of a longer duration (apartment renting) or of a more social or political nature (community gardens or peer-to-peer sharing).

Third, car sharing is guided by norms of negative reciprocity and lends itself to big-brother-type governance. Our findings demonstrate that in market-mediated, anonymous, limited duration of use, and self-service access consumptionscapes, consumers engage in opportunistic behaviors toward the company and one another; they look out for their own interests at the expense of the object as well as the other users. This is in contrast to more social, less anonymous, and more not-for-profit types of access, such as toy libraries, as well as less material types of access such as digital file sharing, where consumers do seem to feel a sense of responsibility toward one another and the community (Giesler 2006; Ozanne and Ozanne 2011). Thus, car sharing is governed by the surveillance-style governance models employed to induce equitable usage among the community. Because of the negative reciprocity that characterizes our context of access, the surveillance and command controls are welcomed, supporting McGrath's (2004) controversial conclusion that big-brother control models can be beneficial to consumers. This finding is in contrast to the widely accepted negative stance on surveillance both in academia and among consumers.

Fourth, we find a deterrence of brand community. This is an interesting finding, considering that car sharing is less extreme in terms of anonymity and involves higher levels of consumer collaboration when compared to other access consumptionscapes, such as online borrowing programs (Netflix) in which no consumer collaboration or contact is expected or required. Thus, we expected a sense of brand community to emerge. Furthermore, prior work has systematically established the emergence of brand community under ownership in a variety of product and cultural contexts (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001; Schau, Muniz, and Arnould 2009) as well as in sharing (Belk 2010). However, we show that consumers resist cocreation efforts from the company to engage in community building or identity connection that go beyond market exchange (Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008). Anonymity, the profit motivation of market media-

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

tion, and the low level of political consumerism can inhibit motivations to engage in community building. Moreover, the individualized, contractual nature of car sharing alienates consumers from one another as market norms of negative reciprocity dominate. Paraphrasing Sahlins (1972), Marcoux (2009) argues that "as more and more alien members and outsiders become participants in exchange and, most important, as market people become involved in these exchanges, the fear of exploitation increases and there is an inversion of the logic of reciprocity—a switch from reciprocity to exploitation" (681). Similarly, consumers escape to market-mediated access to avoid the possibility of opportunism, social obligations with others, as well as cocreation efforts from companies. The altruistic model of sharing and the generalized reciprocity associated with it do not seem to apply in contexts characterized by anonymity and a high level of market mediation.

The implications for the brand community literature are that due to the individually motivated, noncommunal nature of car sharing, users are more likely to be resistant to community-building strategies on the part of the marketer. Our study suggests that motivations for engaging in car sharing are primarily utilitarian as compared to identity enhancing, and there is also a preference for surveillance and command controls rather than relying on trust and community. In this way our study echoes Marcoux's (2009) findings in emphasizing the benefits of the market over reliance on community and challenges the romantic view of sharing as "ennobling, humanizing or of greater moral worth" (671). It is not clear, however, whether the type of governance (command control) also shaped the type of reciprocity (negative) and deterred community formation. Future research should examine the relationships between these variables further.

Access through the market can also liberate consumers from the emotional, social, and property obligations that come with ownership. Prior consumer research has outlined the salient emotional and existential roles that possessions and ownership play in maintaining and displaying consumer self-identity, the attachments consumers form with possessions, as well as the traumatic and disabling experience resulting from the loss of possessions (Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000; Tian and Belk 2005). However, in our study we find that the "work of consumption" is absent, as consumers do not engage in appropriation practices with accessed objects (Miller 1987). Thus, access-based consumption similar to car sharing can be conceptualized as a style of consumer downshifting different from that identified in prior research (Gandolfi and Cherrier 2008). In contrast to the downshifting lifestyles associated with voluntary simplicity (Cherrier 2009), consumers engaging in this type of access-based consumption are not politically motivated by anticonsumerism sentiments but rather by a downshifting of the obligations associated with ownership or sharing. Access systems similar to car sharing emerge as a simpler mode of consumption, compared to ownership and sharing, as they are socially shaped by liquid modernity, economic recession, reurbanization, and a knowledge society in which, increasingly, value is found in intangible resources that enable identity flexibility and ecologically smart consumption.

By showing that access is becoming a symbolic resource for identity construction, we also highlight an interesting shift in the structural system of the sign in our discussion of use and sign value. Our findings demonstrate that in access contexts similar to car sharing, consumers resist any engagement in the system of objects beyond use value. Thus, they resist the process of reification defined by Baudrillard (1981) as the triumph of objects in which things come to dominate people. As enduring attachment to possessions is becoming problematic in a liquid society, in which identity positions and projects are not stable (Bauman 2000), access-based consumption is gaining sign value because it enables consumers' freedom of lifestyles and flexible identity projects. We illustrate that a shift in the established politics of consumption is emerging in which access is gaining symbolic capital as a more economically and ecologically viable, flexible, and freeing consumption mode. If not having a car is no longer tied to status loss, since it is a decision made on "smart" grounds rather than on nonaffordability, the necessity of car ownership for symbolic reasons withers. However, our findings also emphasize that while access has gained popularity, ownership continues to remain the ideal normative mode of consumption in contemporary American society.

Our study also distinguishes access from sharing (Belk 2010), and in this way we address calls to "advance our understandings of the distinctions between sharing, lending/borrowing and commodity exchange" (729). In Belk's (2010) conceptualization of sharing, he proposes that access models, such as car sharing within a large commercial car-sharing organization such as Zipcar, represents a case of "sharing-out." Indeed, prior research also has suggested sharing as a theoretical framework that explains access-based consumption under more social, not-for-profit contexts in which consumers access one another's property (peer-to-peer sharing) or consume from a commons (e.g., Chen 2009; Ozanne and Ozanne 2011). Our study builds on Belk (2010) as he points out that the examination of sharing outside the immediate family is where "the phenomenon of sharing becomes the most interesting and has great social and theoretical implications" (725). We find that in contrast to the altruistic model of sharing, the anonymous, market-mediated type of access does not produce a sense of joint or perceived ownership and is not prosocial but instead is primarily guided by self-serving and utilitarian motivation and negative reciprocity toward the accessed object, firm, and other consumers. In this way we have identified a unique non-ownership consumption mode that stands in contrast to sharing and is similar to commodity exchange, but without the ownership transfer, and is a result of a high level of market mediation and anonymity, limited temporality of a tangible accessed object, and low political consumerism. Thus, the dimensions identified in this study provide a starting point for examining boundary conditions in the research of exchange. However, as various types of access models con-

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

tinue to emerge in the marketplace, especially those that involve peer-to-peer sharing of individual rather than company property, a large gray area exists where boundaries between sharing and market-mediated access are blurred, and more research is needed to further distinguish boundary conditions between sharing and forms of access.

We have studied access-based consumption in the context of car sharing, and the four outcomes we have outlined are tied to this context. As we have suggested, the field of access is emerging, and various types of access exist in and outside the market. The six dimensions of the overall field of access, specifically, temporality, anonymity, market mediation, consumer involvement, type of accessed object, and political consumerism, can guide future research. For instance, we suggest that the type of accessed object may shape the consumer-object relationship. In this study, we study a tangible object, cars, which has a special place in the American psyche, and this has influenced the way our informants feel about access in this context. Thus, we do not find identity and hedonic associations with the object. Other contexts, such as accessing a hotel room or haute couture (Rent the Runaway), which are still most likely driven by the type of self-serving motivations that we have outlined here, may have more hedonistic and status-driven motivations as well. Future research is needed to further examine access contexts in which identity and the hedonic value of the object are more salient. Additionally, future research on digital materiality would further expand our understanding, as observers have argued that these types of access involve the principles of sharing out (Belk 2010). For instance, consumers may not experience disgust from contagion effects when access is digital (e.g., eBook rental or sharing of digital music files), and thus consumption may be guided by different norms of reciprocity, and brand communities may emerge (Giesler 2006).

Another area of future research is to further explore the impact of time on the nature of the consumer-object and consumer-consumer relationships. We study a context in which access is longitudinal through club membership, while the use of the product is limited and transactional in nature. We find that this temporal dimension does not enable the consumer to extend the self to the object and is also related to more market-based norms of reciprocity and may deter brand community. However, our findings may differ from consumptionscapes in which the duration of the use of the accessed object is long term rather than transactional, such as in car leasing or long-term apartment renting. In these contexts, the consumer interacts regularly for longer periods with the object. We would expect that the consumer would experience a perceived sense of ownership toward the leased car, for example, and identify with it as an identity symbol.

Our findings also call for future inquiry into understanding consumers' relationships to materiality in other modes of consumption in which property right boundaries are absent or blurred. Do consumers experience a sense of ownership with public goods, like parks? We study one particular type of access in which individuals use tangible objects for short periods with clear property boundaries. In other contexts of access, for instance, time-share housing, individuals continue to hold full property rights under fractional ownership modes; however, the benefits and obligations are shared with others, and a shared sense of ownership exists (Belk 2010; Orsi and Doskow 2009). Similarly, peer-to-peer sharing of personal property constitutes another context in which self-other boundaries are blurred. However, we know little about the similarities and differences between these access modes and ownership or about the specific governance mechanisms that regulate these forms of consumption. Future research could explore how opportunism is regulated and monitored within and outside the boundaries of the extended self and the implications this has for the object-self relationship.

Finally, we expected political consumerism to be an underlying motivation behind the decision to engage in car sharing, especially as it relates to anticar, environmental concerns, which we did not find. However, other types of access may have more grassroots or community-based motivations, such as engaging in community gardening (Chatzidakis et al. 2012). In these contexts, we would expect behavior to be guided by social norms of reciprocity, and there could be an emergence of brand communities. We invite future research to explore the role of political consumerism in the shift of sociocultural politics of consumption.

In sum, the consumer research literature is just beginning to investigate the various forms of access-based consumption, such as sharing out (Belk 2010) and experiential access (Chen 2009). The literature is also beginning to address when, how, and in what ways the marketplace can be useful to these types of exchanges (Marcoux 2009). We see our work as building on this stream of literature and opening doors for other researchers to continue to examine evolving consumption modes. Given that many core consumer behavior theories take ownership as an assumption, investigating alternative modes allows us to question established relationships in the literature regarding consumer-object, consumer-consumer, and community relations.

REFERENCES

Allen, Chris (2008), *Housing Market Renewal and Social Class*, London: Routledge.

Argo, Jennifer J., Darren W. Dahl, and Andrea C. Morales (2006), "Consumer Contamination: How Consumers React to Products Touched by Others," *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (April), 81–94.

Arnould, Eric, and Melanie Wallendorf (1994), "Market Oriented Ethnography: Interpretation Building and Market Strategy Formulation," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31 (4), 484–504.

Arsel, Zeynep, and Susan Dobscha (2011), "Hybrid Pro-social Exchange Systems: The Case of Freecycle," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 39, ed. Rohini Ahluwalia, Tanya L. Chartrand, and Rebecca K. Ratner, Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

Askegaard, Søren (2010), "Experience Economy in the Making:

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

Hedonism, Play and Coolhunting in Automotive Song Lyrics," *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, 13 (4), 351–71.
Baker, Dean (2008), "The Homeownership Ideology," *Guardian*, April 21.
Ball, Dwayne A., and Lori H. Tasaki (1992), "The Role and Measurement of Attachment in Consumer Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 1 (2), 155–72.
Bardhi, Fleura, Giana M. Eckhardt, and Eric J. Arnould (2012), "Liquid Relationship to Possessions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (3), electronically published January 12.
Baudrillard, Jean (1981), *For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*, St. Louis: Telos.
Bauman, Zygmunt (2000), *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity.
——— (2007), *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Cambridge: Polity.
Belk, Russell (1988), "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (September), 139–68.
——— (2007), "Why Not Share Rather than Own?" *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 611 (1), 126–40.
——— (2010), "Sharing," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (February), 715–34.
Belk, Russell, and Rosa Llamas (2011), "The Nature and Effects of Sharing in Consumer Behavior," in *Transformative Consumer Research for Personal and Collective Well-Being*, ed. David Glen Mick, Simone Pettigrew, Cornelia Pechmann, and Julie L. Ozanne, New York: Routledge, 625–46.
Bernard, Russell H. (2002), *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 3rd ed., New York: Altamira.
Bernthal, Matthew J., David Crockett, and Randall L. Rose (2005), "Credit Cards as Lifestyle Facilitators," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (1), 130–45.
Botsman, Rachel, and Roo Rogers (2010), *What's Mine Is Yours: The Rise of Collaborative Consumption*, New York: HarperCollins.
Brown, Stephen, Robert Kozinets, and John Sherry (2003), "Teaching Old Brands New Tricks: Retro Branding and the Revival of Brand Meaning," *Journal of Marketing*, 67 (3), 19–33.
Chatzidakis, Andreas, Pauline Maclaran, and Alan Bradshaw (2012), "Heterotopian Space and the Utopics of Ethical and Green Consumption," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 28 (3–4), 494–515.
Chen, Yu (2009), "Possession and Access: Consumer Desires and Value Perceptions Regarding Contemporary Art Collection and Exhibit Visits," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (April), 925–40.
Cherrier, Helene (2009), "Anti-consumption Discourses and Consumer Resistant Identities," *Journal of Business Research*, 62 (2), 181–90.
Cheshire, Lynda, Peter Walters, and Ted Rosenblatt (2010), "The Politics of Housing Consumption: Renters as Flawed Consumers on a Master Planned Estate," *Urban Studies*, 47 (12), 2597–2614.
Communispace/Ogilvy (2011), "Eyes Wide Open, Wallet Half Shut: The Emerging Post-recession Consumer Consciousness," WPP White Papers, http://www.wpp.com/wpp/marketing/consumerinsights/eyes-wide-open-wallets-half-shut.htm.
Devinney, Timothy, Patrice Auger, and Giana Eckhardt (2010), *The Myth of the Ethical Consumer*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Douglas, Mary (1991), "The Idea of a Home: A Kind of Space," *Social Research*, 58 (1), 289–307.
Durgee, Jeffrey, and Gina O'Connor (1995), "An Exploration into Renting as Consumption Behavior," *Psychology and Marketing*, 12 (2), 89–104.
Firat, Fuat, and Alladi Venkantesh (1995), "Liberatory Postmodernism and the Reenchantment of Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (3), 239–67.
Fischer, Eileen, and Cele Otnes (2006), "Breaking New Grounds: Developing Grounded Theories in Marketing and Consumer Behavior," in *Handbook of Qualitative Methods in Marketing*, ed. Russell Belk, Northampton, MA: Elgar, 19–30.
Florida, Richard (2011), "With Zipcar's IPO, Stock Market Endorses Rentership Society," *Atlantic*, April.
Frei, Frances X. (2005), "Zipcar: Influencing Customer Behavior," Harvard Business School Case Study 9-605-054, June 30, Cambridge, MA.
Gandolfi, Franco, and Helene Cherrier (2008), *Downshifting: A Theoretical and Practical Approach to Living a Simplified Life*, Hyderabad: ICFAI University Press.
Gansky, Lisa (2010), *The Mesh: Why the Future of Business Is Sharing*, New York: Penguin.
Giesler, Markus (2006), "Consumer Gift System: Netnographic Insights from Napster," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33 (September), 283–90.
Hardin, Garrett (1968), "The Tragedy of the Commons," *Science*, 162 (3859), 1243–48.
Holt, Douglas (2004), *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business Press.
Hsing, Kai (2009), "What a $300,000 Parking Space Means for the Rest of Us," *WBZ News*, June 15th, 8:21 a.m.
Katzev, Richard (2003), "Car Sharing: A New Approach to Urban Transportation Problems," *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*, 3 (1), 65–86.
Kleine, Susan S., Robert E. Kleine III, and Chris T. Allen (1995), "How Is Possession 'Me' or 'Not Me'? Characterizing Types and an Antecedent of Material Possession Attachment," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (December), 327–43.
Leinberger, Christopher B. (2007), *The Option of Urbanism: Investing in a New American Dream*, Washington, DC: Island.
Levine, Mark (2009), "Share My Ride," *New York Times Magazine*, March 5.
Lovelock, Christopher, and Evert Gummesson (2004), "Whither Services Marketing? In Search of a New Paradigm and Fresh Perspectives," *Journal of Service Research*, 7 (1), 20–41.
Marcoux, Jean Sébastien (2009), "Escaping the Gift Economy," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (4), 671–85.
Marx, Karl (1930), *Capital*, London: Dent.
Marx, Patricia (2011), "The Borrowers," *New Yorker*, January 31, 34–38.
McCracken, Grant (1988), *The Long Interview*, Qualitative Research Methods Series, London: Sage.
McGrath, John (2004), *Loving Big Brother: Performance, Privacy and Surveillance Space*, New York: Routledge.
McIntyre, Zhan, and Kim McKee (2008), "Governance and Sustainability in Glasgow: Connecting Symbolic Capital and Housing Consumption Regeneration," *Area*, 40 (4), 481–90.
Micheletti, Michele, Andreas Føllesdal, and Dietlind Stolle (2004), *Politics, Products, and Markets: Exploring Political Consumerism Past and Present*, New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.
Miller, Daniel (1987), *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford: Blackwell.
Moeller, Sabine, and Kristina Wittkowski (2010), "The Burdens of Ownership: Reasons for Preferring Renting," *Marketing Service Quality*, 20 (2), 176–91.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017

Muniz, Albert M., Jr., and Thomas C. O'Guinn (2001), "Brand Community," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27 (4), 412–32.

Naughton, Keith (2008), "Can You Give Your Car Up?" *Newsweek*, August 4.

Orsi, Janelle, and Emily Doskow (2009), *The Sharing Solution: How to Save Money, Simplify Your Life and Build a Community*, Berkeley: Nolo.

Ozanne, Lucie, and Paul Ballantine (2010), "Sharing as a Form of Anti-consumption? An Examination of Toy Library Users," *Journal of Consumer Behavior*, 9 (6), 485–98.

Ozanne, Lucie, and Julie Ozanne (2011), "A Child's Right to Play: The Social Construction of Civic Virtues in Toy Libraries," *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, 30 (2), 264–78.

Peck, Joann, and Suzanne B. Shu (2009), "The Effect of Mere Touch on Perceived Ownership," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (October), 434–47.

Pierce, Jon L., Tatiana Kostova, and Kurt T. Dirks (2001), "Towards a Theory of Psychological Ownership in Organizations," *Academy of Management Review*, 26 (2), 298–310.

Price, Linda, Eric J. Arnould, and Carolyn Curasi (2000), "Older Consumers' Dispossession of Special Possessions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27 (2), 179–201.

Price, Linda, Eric J. Arnould, and Patrick Tierney (1995), "Going to Extremes: Managing Service Encounters and Assessing Provider Performance," *Journal of Marketing*, 59 (2), 83–97.

Pridmore, Jason (forthcoming), "Collaborative Surveillance: Configuring Contemporary Marketing Practice," in *The Political Economy of Surveillance*, ed. Laureen Snider and Kirstie Ball, London: Routledge.

Radka, Rich, and Abby Margolis (2011), "Changing Models of Ownership and Value Exchange," presentation at Epic Conference, Boulder, September 20.

Reuters (2011), "Zipcar Prices IPO at $14 to $16 per Share," March 30, http://www.reuters.com.

Richins, Marsha L. (1994), "Special Possession and the Expression of Material Values," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 522–33.

Rifkin, Jeremy (2000), *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism Where All of Life Is a Paid for Experience*, New York: Penguin.

Ritzer, George (2010), *Sociological Theory*, New York: McGraw-Hill.

Ronald, Richard (2008), *The Ideology of Home Ownership: Homeworker Societies and the Role of Housing*, New York: Macmillan.

Rowlands, Rob, and Craig M. Gurney (2000), "Young People's Perceptions of Housing Tenure: A Case Study in the Socialization of Tenure Prejudice," *Housing Theory and Society*, 17 (3), 121–30.

Rozin, Paul, and April E. Fallon (1987), "A Perspective on Disgust," *Psychological Review*, 94 (1), 23–41.

Sahlins, Marshall (1972), *Stone Age Economics*, Chicago: Aldine-Atherton.

Schau, Hope, Albert Muniz, and Eric Arnould (2009), "How Brand Community Practices Create Value," *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (5), 30–51.

Schouten, John W. (1991), "Selves in Transition: Symbolic Consumption in Personal Rites of Passage and Identity Reconstruction," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 91 (March), 412–25.

Schouten, John W., and James H. McAlexander (1995), "Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 22 (June), 43–61.

Shultz, Clifford, and Morris Holbrook (1999), "Marketing and the Tragedy of the Commons: A Synthesis, Commentary and Analysis for Action," *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, 18 (2), 218–29.

Simmel, Georg (1950), *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans. and ed. Kurt H. Wolff, Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

Snare, Frank (1972), "The Concept of Property," *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 9 (2), 200–206.

Spiggle, Susan (1994), "Analysis and Interpretation of Qualitative Data in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (December), 491–503.

Strahilevitz, Michal A., and George F. Loewenstein (1998), "The Effect of Ownership History on the Valuation of Objects," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (December), 276–89.

Strauss, Anselm, and Juliet Corbin (1998), *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*, 2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thompson, Craig (1997), "Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Marketing Insights from the Texts of Consumers' Consumption Stories," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (November), 438–55.

Tian, Kelly, and Russell W. Belk (2005), "Extended Self and Possessions in the Workplace," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (September), 297–310.

Visconti, Luca M., John F. Sherry Jr., Stefania Borghini, and Laurel Anderson (2010), "Street Art, Sweet Art? Reclaiming the 'Public' in Public Place," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (3), 511–29.

Walsh, Bryan (2011), "Today's Smart Choice: Don't Own. Share," *Time International*, Atlantic ed., March 28.

Zwick, Detlev, Samuel K. Bonsu, and Aaron Darmody (2008), "Putting Consumers to Work: 'Co-creation' and New Marketing Govern-Mentality," *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 8 (2), 163–96.

Downloaded from https://academic.oup.com/jcr/article-abstract/39/4/881/1798309/Access-Based-Consumption-The-Case-of-Car-Sharing
by guest
on 26 September 2017