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THE ETHIC OF CARE AND WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF PUBLIC SPACE

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Abstract

Women's use of public space has been the subject of much recent research. Existing theory in environment-behavior studies is inadequate to explain these findings. This paper proposes the adoption of the feminist theory of the 'ethic of care' to synthesize and explain much existing research on women's experience of public space. The ethic of care is a model of moral development in which the highest moral imperative requires taking care of needs and sustaining relationships. This paper examines how the ethic of care creates constraints for women's use of public space, by encouraging women to put others first and by reinforcing women's primary responsibility for care-giving. The ethic of care constrains women's use of public space through the association of women with low status 'caring' occupations, and through actions that extend restrictive caring to women. At the same time, through women's use of public space, the ethic of care generates possibilities for women to give and receive care from others and themselves, and creates possibilities for extending care to encompass public spaces. The ethic of care is explored in detail in light of two areas of environment-behavior research on women and public spaces: preference and fear of crime. In conclusion, the paper advocates the ethic of care as a framework for future activism, design, and scholarship concerning public spaces.

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Introduction¹

Much is written about women's experiences of public spaces. Over the past two decades, researchers have examined women's travel, recreation, and everyday behaviors, especially as these are shaped by women's responsibilities, by gender oppression, and by insensitive planning and design. At this time, advances in theory are greatly needed to synthesize and explain these research findings.

Research on women's use of public spaces is frequently presented outside of an explicit theoretical framework, beyond a general feminist orientation (McDowell, 1983). When considered, theoretical conceptualizations typically take the form of the 'separation of spheres ideal', which is invoked as the historical context of women's limitations in the public realm (*cf.* Hayden, 1984; Franck & Paxson, 1989; Valentine, 1992; Rose, 1993). This Victorian ideal delineated separate economic and spatial realms for women and for men. It advocated 'private' (domestic) spaces and virtues for women, and 'public'

spaces and activities for men. Separation was reinforced by capitalism (dividing production and reproduction) and by suburbanization (Valentine, 1992).

The separation of spheres ideal never addressed the public space experiences of many Western women, however. This ideal told little about the lives of working class and low income women, or of women of color, to whom it rarely applied (Collins, 1991; Rose, 1993). Furthermore, the separation of spheres ideal does not speak directly to women's continued constraints in public space today. Current patterns of employment and of urban development in the U.S. and in other Western countries ensure a strong presence for women in public spaces,² yet constraints on women's public space activities remain. Theoretical advances are needed to better understand contemporary women's experiences of public space.

Upon examination, women's constraints in public space frequently arise, at least in part, from their commitment to caring for others. Many women's

public space behaviors and concerns are characterized by a focus on children, husbands or romantic partners, and/or other friends and family. The commitment to caring as a guiding principle can be explained by the feminist theory of the 'ethic of care'. Articulated by Carol Gilligan in 1982, the ethic of care is a model of moral development in which the highest moral imperative requires taking care of needs and sustaining relationships (Gilligan, 1982). The ethic of care represents an alternative to the prevailing model of moral development, known as the 'ethic of justice', in which moral development is tied not to maintaining relationships, but to recognizing universal standards of fairness, autonomy, and respect for others' rights. According to Gilligan, many people, especially women, make moral decisions in ways more consistent with the ethic of care than with the ethic of justice.

Good theories are identified, in part, by the challenge they pose to current ways of thinking, as well as by their ability to explain research findings and to generate important new research questions. By these standards, the ethic of care is indeed a good theory (Kroeger-Mappes, 1994). Gilligan's ethic of care has had enormous impact on both scholars and the lay public (Tronto, 1993; Kroeger-Mappes, 1994). The ethic of care has prompted debate and research among moral theorists, and has generated controversy among feminist scholars (*cf.* Gilligan, 1989; Puka, 1989, 1994; Gilligan *et al.*, 1990; Stacks, 1990; Tronto, 1993; Clement, 1996).

Much recent U.S. public space scholarship and activism proceeds from a 'Justice' orientation, emphasizing the extension of civil rights to a broad range of 'user groups' (e.g. debates about rights of free speech, curfew laws, etc.). An ethic of care towards public spaces and their users is less often adopted, but has much to contribute. In environment-behavior studies, the ethic of care might synthesize and help to explain many of women's constraints in public space. Equally important, the ethic of care may reveal positive aspects of women's relationships with public spaces, and may suggest new opportunities for enhancing well-being in public space.

This paper examines how the ethic of care shapes women's use and perception of public spaces. The paper is primarily theoretical, but it incorporates empirical support from interviews with women about their use of public spaces. To begin, the ethic of care is explained and critiqued. Using a framework adapted from the field of leisure studies, the ethic of care is then considered as a source of con-

straints and possibilities for women's use of public spaces. To illustrate its potential utility, the ethic of care is examined in light of two areas of environment-behavior research on women and public spaces: preference and fear of crime. In conclusion, the paper advocates the ethic of care as a framework for future activism, design, and scholarship concerning public spaces.

Methods

This paper is based primarily on synthesis and analysis of existing research on women and public spaces, in light of the theory of the ethic of care. The paper also draws upon 43 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with women in Orange County, CA. Interviews examined women's use and perception of urban public spaces, including spaces they used most often, and their reactions to a common set of spaces. Questions also examined women's feelings of fear and comfort in public space, and the ways in which women's relationships impacted their use of public space. The ethic of care was not the primary focus of interviews, yet women's responses were illuminating on this topic. Interview responses are therefore incorporated as additional support for findings derived from other research on women and public space, and as confirmation of the value of the ethic of care to explain these findings.

Interview participants were English speaking, adult women residents and/or employees in Orange County. Participants were solicited through snowball sampling. They intentionally varied in age, occupation, home or work location, and racial/ethnic background. Participants identified themselves as white (20 women), black (10), Hispanic (10) and Chinese-American (3). All participants were middle class, broadly defined by household income (U.S. \$30,000-60,000), with at least some college education, and/or white collar occupations. Participants included women with and without current romantic partners (husbands, boyfriends, or domestic partners), and with and without children at home. Interviews lasted approximately 1h, and all were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim, and content-analysed, using an increasingly detailed series of coding and 'memoing', after Patton (1990). Though these data speak most centrally to the experiences of middle-class women in the south-western U.S., many findings are likely relevant to other women in the U.S. and other Western countries.

The Ethic of Care: A Conceptual Framework

The ethic of care is a model of moral development, in which 'taking care' receives highest priority. Care encompasses:

everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our 'world', so that we can live in it as well as possible. Our world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment (Fisher & Tronto, 1991; in Tronto, 1993, p. 103).

Care is not a personality disposition, but an activity of sustaining relationship, of maintaining a connection so that no-one is left alone (Henderson & Allen, 1991). The ethic of care requires action to promote care, beyond simply avoiding hurt (Gilligan, 1982). Carol Gilligan (1982) articulated the ethic of care as a response to the prevailing model of moral development, known as the 'ethic of justice'. The ethic of justice was developed by Lawrence Kohlberg (1981–1984), derived primarily from interviews with middle-class white boys. Kohlberg's ethic embodied a formal and abstract morality comprised of universal principles of justice and rights (Tronto, 1993). The ethic of justice was refined over time, and was generalized to women.

Gilligan questioned whether, in fact, Kohlberg's ethic of justice represented women's patterns of moral decision-making. In her own research with mostly white, middle-class girls and women, Gilligan found women making moral decisions 'in a different voice'. She labeled this voice the ethic of care. While the ethic of justice emphasized competing rights, Gilligan found these women focused instead on competing responsibilities. She heard women making moral decisions based on concrete and specific circumstances, rather than on abstract principles (Tronto, 1993).

Gilligan's ethic of care is rooted in object relations theory, as articulated by Nancy Chodorow and others. According to Chodorow (1978), women approach the world in terms of connectedness. Because they identify with their mothers—primary parents of the same sex—young girls establish a female gender identity based on empathy and relationships. Young boys, in contrast, develop a gender identity based on individuation and separation from the mother. The ethic of justice is premised on individuation and autonomy; the ethic of care is based on relationship. The ethic of care is not intended to supersede the ethic of justice. According to Gilligan and others, morality should ideally encompass both caring and justice (Gilligan, 1982; Tronto, 1993; Clement, 1996).

Gilligan claims that the ethic of care is neither exclusive to women, nor utilized by all women. Yet, she and others argue, women are more likely than men to be socialized, to participate in and to value care-giving (*cf.* Chodorow, 1978; Ruddick, 1989; Henderson & Allen, 1991). According to Gilligan, women often define themselves in the context of relationships, and judge themselves by their ability to care. Many women find it difficult to extend caring to include themselves. The 'selfless women' is cherished as a feminine ideal, and women vigorously avoid being judged selfish (Gilligan, 1982). Thus, women's competing responsibilities are often experienced as a struggle between meeting one's own needs and abandoning others, and responding to others and abandoning oneself (Gilligan *et al.*, 1990). At its highest levels, however, the ethic of care invokes responsibility for caring for self, as well as for others:

It is important to emphasize that the problem for women is not in the value of care, connection, and 'other-centeredness': rather, the problem is in giving only to others and to consider it 'selfish' to care for the self, particularly in regard to basic human activities like leisure, recreation, and relaxation (Henderson & Allen, 1991, p. 100).

The ethic of care further requires individuals to take responsibility for their behavior. 'Thinking of others' cannot excuse evasion or disavowal of one's own moral decisions (Gilligan, 1982).

Critique of the ethic of care

The meaning and implications of the ethic of care have been the subjects of intense scholarly debate (*cf.* Hanen & Nielson, 1987; Calhoun, 1988; Epstein, 1988; Card, 1991; Puka, 1994; Clement, 1996; Jaggar, 1991). Criticisms address two types of concerns: the relationship between gender, race/ethnicity, and caring; and the status of caring as a moral orientation.

First, critics contend that the ethic of care is not unique to women. They argue that Gilligan's ethic of care essentializes women as innately caring, or as more moral than are men (Kroeger-Mappes, 1994; Puka, 1994; Clement, 1996). Other critics argue that Gilligan's theory generalizes from the experiences of middle class, white women to all women (*cf.* Collins, 1991).³ These concerns can be partially addressed by recognizing that not all women, or all men, rely exclusively on one ethic or the other (*cf.* Ward, 1988; Stacks, 1990). Nor do all women utilize an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982; Clement, 1996). Though women are most often associated with caring, women are not innately more caring than men, nor are women morally superior (Henderson &

Allen, 1991). Essentializing women as 'naturally' caring denies the constructed nature of gender and may reinforce and justify gender oppression (Puka, 1989; Stacks, 1990; Kroeger-Mappes, 1994).

Though Gilligan identified the ethic of care by listening to mostly white, middle class, women's voices, caring as a moral basis extends far beyond this group. Communities of color are often distinguished by a deep commitment to caring as an ethical foundation (Tronto, 1993; Clement, 1996). Afrocentric morality particularly resembles what Gilligan describes as an ethic of care (Harding, 1987; Cannon, 1988; Houston, 1990; Stacks, 1990; Collins, 1991). Afrocentric morality proceeds from a sense of an 'extended self' that is fundamentally embedded in relationships with family, kin, and community (Nobles, 1974; Cannon, 1988; Houston, 1990; Stacks, 1990).

Among those with less race- and class-privilege, an ethic of care often prevails among both men and women (*cf.* Ward, 1988; Tronto, 1993; Kroeger-Mappes, 1994). Men and women in some groups appear to rely equally on justice and care orientations, or on integrated perspectives that include both orientations, justice and care (Ward, 1988; Stacks, 1990). Similarity in men's and women's perspectives may follow from similarity in experiences and circumstances (Stacks, 1990). Thus, gender differences in moral development may be strongest in the white, relatively privileged groups that were Gilligan and Kohlberg's focus (Tronto, 1993). Likewise, the conflict Gilligan identifies between caring and autonomy may matter most for white, middle- or upper-class women (who are frequently the subjects of research on women and public space, including many quoted in this paper). Though different groups arrive at caring as a moral basis through different paths, their moral decisions share important similarities because of their basis in caring.⁴

The second set of criticisms questions the relative importance of caring, and the relationship of caring to justice. Feminist critics fear that reinforcing the association between women and caring supports women's subordination (Kroeger-Mappes, 1994). Others argue that attempts to elevate an ethic of care are simply efforts by those in subordinate positions (including women, people of color, and poor people) to legitimate their involvement in caring (Puka, 1989). The subordinate status of caring must be recognized as not due to any innate characteristic of caring, however, but rather as the result of social principles that devalue caring (Tronto, 1993).

Some critics subsume the ethic of care into the ethic of justice, arguing that the ethic of care per-

tains only to 'lower order' personal relations, not to moral decision-making in the public domain (discussed in Tronto, 1993; Jaggar, 1991). These arguments for the greater 'universality' of the ethic of justice reinforce Gilligan's position—namely, that the ethic of justice represents a particular view of morality, one that reflects the views of those in power and that retains their privilege (Tronto, 1993). Arguments for the supremacy of a 'justice' orientation support false and harmful distinctions between personal and political concerns. In place of this public/private dichotomy, moral decisions concerning personal relations can be regarded as models for political decision-making based on caring (Clement, 1996).⁵ The following sections extend this discussion, by examining women's use of public space in the context of the ethic of care.

The Ethic of Care and Women's Experiences of Public Space

The ethic of care may help explain women's use and perception of public space. Scholars in leisure studies already recognize the value of the ethic of care for understanding women's leisure. In their review of research in leisure studies on the ethic of care, Henderson and Allen (1991) conceptualize caring as a constraint and as a source of possibilities for women's leisure. Their framework—ethic of care as constraint and as possibility—is adopted to examine women's experience of public space. Constraints thus comprise factors that intervene between women's public space activities and experiences, and their satisfaction with use of public spaces (including enjoyment, preference, participation, and meaning) (after Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; Harrington, *et al.*, 1992).⁶ Possibilities include ways in which the ethic of care enhances public space activities and experiences. The following section reviews existing environment-behavior research on women and public spaces, to demonstrate how the ethic of care may explain constraints and possibilities in women's activities.

The ethic of care as a constraint in women's use of public spaces

Existing environment-behavior research documents many constraints impacting women's use of public space. These findings are summarized in Table 1. Constraints include limited resources (e.g. money, mobility); negative emotions (e.g. stress, fear); burdensome responsibilities (e.g. housework,

TABLE 1

Women in the U.S. and other Western countries face constraints in their use of urban public spaces, as described below. Constraints may impact where and when women use public spaces, with whom, for how long, and their behavior and experiences during use. Constraints operate in combination with each other, not independently (Crawford & Godbey, 1987). Constraints are experienced differently based on characteristics that include race/ethnicity, class, parental and marital status, age, sexuality, religion, and physical ability

Constraints in women's experience of public space	Examples of how the ethic of care may generate constraints
Constrained resources	
Limited time <i>(cf. Chichoki, 1980; Michelson, 1985; Salem, 1986; Rosenbloom, 1988; Franck & Paxson, 1989; Henderson et al., 1996)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Household, child-care responsibilities may constrain whether, when, and how long women use public spaces. ● Women may prioritize spending time on others in public space.
Limited money <i>(cf. Wekerle et al., 1980; Mazey & Lee, 1983; Saegert, 1985; Peterson, 1987; Rosenbloom, 1988; Spain, 1992; Preston et al., 1993; Blumen, 1994; Hanson et al., 1994)</i>	Women may have limited money for public space activities, because they: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forego wage work or choose part time or low paying work to accommodate child-care and household responsibilities. ● Prioritize spending money on others. ● Work in traditional women's jobs, which are often 'caring' occupations that pay little.
Limited mobility <i>(cf. Wekerle & Carter, 1978; Guillano, 1979; Cichoki, 1980; Fava, 1980; Popenoe, 1980; Mazey & Lee, 1983; Hayden, 1984; Pickup, 1984; Boys, 1985; Salem, 1986; Peterson, 1987; Rosenbloom, 1988; Mazingo, 1989; Preston et al., 1993; Rose, 1993; Blumen, 1994; Fox, 1994)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsibility for housework, child-care makes women's transportation more stressful, fragmented, complex, restricted in distance, and time consuming. ● Prioritizing others' transportation needs may limit women's access to cars, and increase their reliance on public transit.
Isolation, limited social interaction <i>(cf. Wekerle & Carter, 1978; Stamp, 1980; Werner, 1980; Hayden, 1984; Saegert, 1985; Peterson, 1987; Valentine, 1992, 1993)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Their choice of suburbs as ideal environments for children may increase women's isolation in the suburbs. ● Prioritizing others' needs, preferences may limit women's own social interaction in public space.
Limited opportunities <i>(cf. Fava, 1980; McDowell, 1983; Hayden, 1984; Boys, 1985; Meyrowitz, 1985; Saegert, 1985; Peterson, 1987; Franck & Paxson, 1989; Gordon & Riger, 1989; Wilson, 1991; Spain, 1992; Valentine, 1992, 1995; Preston et al., 1993; Rose, 1993; Blumen, 1994; Day, 1997)</i>	Women public space opportunities may be constrained by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Household, child-care responsibilities. ● Fear for children's safety. ● Prioritizing others' needs, preferences.
Lack of services <i>(cf. Mazey & Lee, 1983; Hayden, 1984; Salem, 1986; Peterson, 1987; Weisman, 1992; Ritzdorf, 1994)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Women's use of public space is constrained by insufficient, inconvenient, unaffordable services (child-care, public transit, food service, etc.), which increase the burden of caring for home, children.
Constrained emotions	
Stress, tension <i>(cf. Michelson, 1985; Blumen, 1994)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conflicts between others' needs, preferences and one's own may increase women's stress in public space. ● Responsibility for child-care, housework may increase women's tension in public space (e.g. in commuting).

TABLE 1
Continued

Constraints in women's experience of public space	Examples of how the ethic of care may generate constraints
<p>Fear (<i>cf.</i> Wekerle & Carter, 1978; Hayden, 1984; Saegert, 1985; Salem, 1986; Deegan, 1987; Gordon & Riger, 1989; Valentine, 1992; Day, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999a, 1999b; Wekerle & Whitzman, 1995)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perceived responsibility to be 'nice' to others may increase women's fear in public space. ● Women's responsibility and caring for children, others may expand women's fear in public space. ● Others' caring behavior that restrains women for safety may increase women's fear, restrict their use of public space.
<p>Constraining responsibilities Responsibility for child care (<i>cf.</i> Vanek, 1974; Wekerle & Carter, 1978; Berk, 1980; Fava, 1980; Mazey & Lee, 1983; Bowlby, 1984; Hayden, 1984; Boys, 1985; Michelson, 1985; Saegert, 1985; Salem, 1986; LaRossa, 1988; Franck & Paxson, 1989; Spain, 1992; Horelli & Vespa, 1994; Jensen, 1994;)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary responsibility for taking care of children may constrain women's public spaces activities.
<p>Responsibility for housework, other domestic responsibilities (<i>cf.</i> Berk, 1980; Mazey & Lee, 1983; Hayden, 1984; Boys, 1985; Saegert, 1985; Bella, 1989; Franck & Paxson, 1989; Spain, 1992; Rose, 1993; Horelli & Vespa, 1994; Ritzdorf, 1994)</p>	<p>Women's use of public spaces may be constrained by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Primary responsibility for caring for homes, families (cleaning, shopping, etc.). ● Responsibility for caring for others (buying gifts, pet care, planning holidays, etc.).
<p>Constraining social norms and conditions Oppressive social and gender norms (<i>cf.</i> Henley, 1977; Saegert & Hart, 1978; Wekerle & Carter, 1978; Nager & Nelson-Schulman, 1980; Mazey & Lee, 1983; McDowell, 1983; Hayden, 1984; Lofland, 1984; Boys, 1985; Deegan, 1987; Bondi & Peake, 1988; Bella, 1989; Franck & Paxson, 1989; Gordon & Riger, 1989; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Wilson, 1991; Spain, 1992; Valentine, 1992, 1993, 1995; Weisman, 1992; Rose, 1993; Day, 1994; 1995, 1999a, 1999b; England, 1994; Gardiner, 1994, 1995; Pader, 1994; Sebba, 1994; Swanson, 1995; Wekerle & Whitzman, 1995; Henderson <i>et al.</i>, 1996; Borisoff & Hahn, 1997; de Oliver, 1997; Wenner, 1997)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gender norms for feminine public behavior require women to be friendly to others in public space, which can be oppressive. ● The ideal of feminine selflessness encourages women to prioritize others' needs and preferences in public space. ● The separation of spheres ideal increases women's domestic responsibilities and restricts women's use of public space.
<p>Oppressive and inequitable social conditions (<i>cf.</i> Wekerle & Carter, 1978; Mazey & Lee, 1983; McDowell, 1983; Boys, 1985; Gordon & Riger, 1989; Mazingo, 1989; Wilson, 1991; Spain, 1992; Weisman, 1992)</p>	<p>Women's use of public space is constrained by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Employment in low status 'service' jobs with limited job flexibility. ● Inflexible work schedules that ignore child-care and home responsibilities.
<p>Insensitive, oppressive public policy and legislation (<i>cf.</i> McDowell, 1983; Hayden, 1984; Ritzdorf, 1986, 1994; Franck & Paxson, 1989; Spain, 1992; Weisman, 1992)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack of public support for care of children, older adults constrains women's use of public space.
<p>Insensitive, oppressive design and planning (<i>cf.</i> Wekerle & Carter, 1978; Popenoe, 1980; Fava, 1980; Mazey & Lee, 1983; McDowell, 1983; Hayden, 1984; Boys, 1985; Saegert, 1985; Ritzdorf, 1986; Peterson, 1987; Franck & Paxson, 1989; Wilson, 1991; Spain, 1992; Weisman, 1992; Rose, 1993; Blumen, 1994; Horelli & Vespa, 1994; Wekerle & Whitzman, 1995)</p>	<p>Women's use of public space is constrained by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Designs and plans that assume women's responsibility for care of home and children (e.g. functional zoning, changing facilities in women's rest-rooms only). ● Design and planning that increase the burden of caring for children, home (e.g. functional zoning that separates home and services or jobs, neighborhood designs that do not support care-giving).

child-care); and oppressive social norms and conditions (e.g. restrictive gender norms, insensitive planning and design). The impact of such constraints was confirmed in interviews with women about their use of public spaces. Many constraints for women's use of public space can be understood in the context of the ethic of care (see Table 1).

The ethic of care constrains women's experience of public spaces, when women prioritize caring for other over caring for themselves. Women often privilege other's needs and preferences regarding public space:

(Describing her husband) He loves computers. And he likes anything that has to do with computers. So there's many, many times that he would ask me, you know, 'Okay, there's you know, I need, I wanna go to this place, you know, Computerland', or any of those places. And I absolutely hate those places. So I'll say, 'Okay, I'll come with you, but I'll sit in the car'... I pretty much compromise. I do go with him. Sometimes I even go in. (Woman, aged 46-55)

For example, women's choice of suburban environments as ideal settings for children increases women's own social isolation (Peterson, 1987). Likewise, women's high reliance on public transit and their limited access to the family car stem in part from their prioritization of other family members' transportation needs (Boys, 1985). Oppressive gender norms, such as the ideal of feminine selflessness, encourage women to put others first, as discussed later regarding preference for public space.

The ethic of care further constrains women's public space activities, through women's responsibility for caring for children, family, and home. This limitation was frequently acknowledged by interview respondents.

(About her neighborhood park) I usually go there, because I take my children with me. I don't have free time. My free time is to entertain them. (Women, aged 36-45)

I can't tell you the last time I went to a bar. I'm sure I have, but it's been a while. After I had my kids, it's been a while. We tend to do things that we don't have to leave kids behind. (Woman, aged 36-45)

Swap meets are not really my—I'll go, usually my aunt wants me to go, but otherwise, they don't do too much for me... Usually she likes to go, and she wants someone to keep her company, so I'll go with her... Nothing about it really interests me, unless I go to buy barrettes. Then I'll go, cause my daughter wears a lot of barrettes, so I usually go to buy barrettes. (Woman, aged 26-35)

In existing research, women's high commuting stress, complex trip patterns, and enormous expen-

diture of time in chauffeuring is directly attributed to women's primary responsibility for caring for children (Michelson, 1988; Rosenbloom, 1988). In interviews, women with children at home described the most constraints on their use of public space related to the ethic of care (see also Tivers, 1985, 1988; Henderson & Allen, 1991).

The ethic of care generates additional constraints for women's use of public space because of women's strong presence in 'caring' occupations (e.g. house-keeping, secretarial). These traditional 'women's' jobs are among the lowest paid, reflecting the low societal value placed on caring (Saegert, 1985; Tronto, 1993). For many women, occupation in these positions limits financial resources and flexibility or control over use of public space. For example, one interview respondent who works as a secretary described how she liked to go to Alcoholic Anonymous meetings held at a yacht club on the beach. Because her work schedule had changed, she could no longer attend these meetings. In related research, Mozingo (1989) attributes women's reluctance to use distant office plazas during the lunch hour to women's employment in inflexible, low seniority, 'service' positions.

Women's use of public space is also constrained by public policy, planning, design, and existing social structures that reinforce women's responsibility for care of family and children, or that increase the burden of such care-giving. For example, functional zoning is based on the assumption that women will stay home in the suburbs, caring for children and home (*cf.* Wekerle & Carter, 1978; Saegert, 1985; Salem, 1986). Separation of home from jobs, retail, public transit, etc. decreases women's public space opportunities and increases the burden of care-giving (Mazey & Lee, 1983; Weisman, 1992; Ritzdorf, 1994). Single-family home designs have the same impact, by increasing the redundancy of child care, cooking, etc. (*cf.* Hayden, 1981, 1984).

Finally, the ethic of care constrains women's use of public space, through repressive or restrictive care-giving from others. For example, women's fear in public space is heightened by actions intended to protect women—actions such as escorting women, or admonishing them not to go outside alone at night (*cf.* Deegan, 1987; Valentine, 1992; Day, 1995). Thus, care-giving can constrain recipients as well as caregivers (Clement, 1996). Several interview respondents described such experiences:

Let's say I'm out in a park, and a man just walks by. I always think about, okay, where am I going to go? Where am I going to run? ... I don't know if it's because my mom has always said, 'Be careful. There's

strangers out there'. And she's always worried about us. (Woman, aged 18-25).

I think he's (husband) just concerned, and he likes to be very protective of me, and he thinks I'm very like, may be too friendly sometimes. And he says, you know, maybe sometimes people might take it the wrong way. Or—I talk to all men, or men in general, if they talk to me, you know, strangers—and he sometimes feels that, you know, you have to be careful. (Woman, aged 46-55).

In summary, then, the ethic of care may constrain some women's use of public space by encouraging women to put others first; and by reinforcing women's primary responsibility for care-giving to children, family, and home. The ethic of care indirectly constrains women's use of public space when women are associated with low status 'caring' occupations, when the burden of caring is not accommodated, and when women are designated as the recipients of restrictive caring.

The ethic of care as a source of possibilities for women's use of public spaces

Women's positive experiences and contributions in public space receive far less attention than do constraints on women's activities (Lofland, 1984). However, possibilities arising from women's public space activity can easily be identified in the context of the ethic of care. Possibilities include opportunities for practicing and receiving caring, and for sustaining relationships with friends, family, strangers, and public spaces (see Table 2).

Women's experiences of public space frequently involve giving or receiving care or reinforcing relationships with friends and family. In interviews, women described use of public spaces as opportunities to sustain relationships, and to exchange assistance, affection, rewards, and gifts with others. Such care-giving generates important benefits for individuals and for society (Gilligan, 1982; Shaw, 1992; Horna, 1993; Tronto, 1993). One important benefit is women's enjoyment of public space activity. Another is women's affiliation with others (*cf.* Colley, 1984; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Shaw, 1994; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997):

I really like (bookstore). I like the layout, it gives you some privacy. It's kind of like the library—and I love the library—yet you can talk. My boys like it, and anything they like, I like. (Woman, aged 36-45)

(Describing going places with her family) So it's kind of like, when we go places, parties, any place, we want to all go together. That just makes it so

much nicer than just one. It's like more of a treat to have all of us together, than just one of us. (Woman, aged 18-25)

Another possibility afforded by women's use of public spaces is the opportunity to establish relationships with strangers. Interaction with strangers in the public realm—shopkeepers, mail carriers, other patrons—is a recognized and valued facet of public life (*cf.* Jacobs, 1961; Whyte, 1980; Lofland, 1989; Carr *et al.*, 1992). Such relationships are prized by many women (Wiseman, 1979; Lofland, 1984; Wilson, 1991), including many women interview respondents:

(About a bar she frequents) All the bartenders are very, very friendly and we go there and they treat us good. They know us by name, and you're very comfortable... And we are always talking about new wines that come in, and everybody is into all that. And before you know it, somebody will talk to you about other wines. It's just fun and really nice. I really enjoy it. (Woman, aged 46-55)

(Describing the shopping mall) I like it all. I don't say there's one particular thing. You meet people, and you talk with people. The environment is nice. It's uplifting, gets you out of the house. (Women, aged 76+)

Laguna Beach is a small community within a huge metropolis, and they're very different here. It's a very small town feeling. You know your nursery man, you know your dry cleaner, you know your grocer, they know your name, they know (son). You know, it's so connected, versus everything outside of it. (Women, aged 26-35)

Some women interview respondents discussed interactions with strangers in public space as acts of caring:

The place I always met a lot of people, before my kids grew up, was at McDonald's. They had all this play equipment, and I'd sit along the side. And I'd always have these conversations with these people, who I'd thought wouldn't even have these talks with their friends... I think it was that these people were lonely and they had their kids and they were really isolated, and they never talk to adults. They were both men and women. And they would tell me about their lives and the women about their husband problems... In a way, it felt good... I just, I cared, and you kind of figure, a little bit, this emotional feeling that you bonded with this person. (Woman, aged 46-55)

The ladies at 'See's Candies'... I know all of them... they are a bunch of sweet ladies. And when I come in, they say 'Hey, how are you doing, (name)?' I guess it's because I give them a lot of respect... I mean, they are working, and I walk in, 'Hey, ladies,

TABLE 2

Through women's use of public spaces, possibilities arise for exercising and experiencing care and for sustaining various relationships

Possibilities in women's use of public spaces	Examples of how the ethic of care may generate possibilities
Caring for and from friends and family (<i>cf.</i> Colley, 1984; Deem, 1986; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Horna, 1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women may use public space to reaffirm relationships, provide caring. • Caring in public space provides important societal benefits (e.g. volunteering). • Providing care, sustaining relationships increases women's enjoyment of public space.
Caring for and from strangers (<i>cf.</i> Wiesman, 1979; Henderson, 1983; Lofland, 1984; Wilson, 1991)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women may enjoy social interaction with strangers as part of public life. • Women may give and receive care from strangers in public space (e.g. helping others, listening).
Caring for self (<i>cf.</i> Deem, 1986; hooks, 1990; Wilson, 1991; Bialeschki & Michener, 1994; Shaw, 1994; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women may use public spaces to care for themselves (e.g. eating out, exercise) • Women's use of public space may challenge restrictive gender and race norms.
Caring for and from public spaces (<i>cf.</i> de Bretteville, 1980; Boulding, 1981; Rock, 1981; Noddings, 1984; Reinharz, 1984; Gilkes, 1988; Wolfe & Strachan, 1988; Bland, 1989; Dubrow, 1989; Ruddick, 1989; Henderson & Allen, 1991; Weisman, 1992; Feldman & Stall, 1994; Fox, 1994; Hayden, 1995; Hinsdale <i>et al.</i> 1995; Salleh, 1997)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's activities may constitute caring for public spaces (e.g. historic preservation, peace movements, eco-feminism, community activism.) • Involvement in public spaces, activities may empower women (e.g. participation in women's clubs). • Women's public space activities may sustain relationship with place (e.g. sense of community). • Public spaces may support activities that provide 'care' to women. • Women may prefer public spaces with 'caring' design and employees.
Caring as a basis for feminist utopian environments (<i>cf.</i> Birkby, 1981; Hayden, 1981; Franck, 1989; Franck & Ahrentzen, 1989; Weisman, 1992; Schneekloth, 1994)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feminist utopian designs often emphasize caring for others, sustaining relationships (e.g. through features such as communal kitchens, accommodating different household types, etc.).

how's it going? How's the great-grand-kids?' You know, whatever, just give them the respect, that's what I like about it. Go up there, talk to them, and get their opinions on things. Because for a lot of people who work in retail—I used to work in retail at Home Depot—it is awful. So I try to be their best customer, and it probably makes their day... And that's how I make friends, and later on I will see them somewhere else, at a movie, and they'll go, 'Aren't you that girl that came in my job?' And I'll go 'Hey, yeah'. That is great! (Woman, aged 18–25)

Women's volunteerism (and men's, to a lesser extent) can be understood in terms of need for affiliation and concern for relationships (Henderson, 1983). At the same time, women's use of public space allows them to receive care from strangers. For example, in her research on women's shopping in second-hand stores, Wiseman (1979) identifies major activities that include exchanges of compliments and bar-

gain finds among strangers, and offers to help in dressing and in repairing items (Wiseman, 1979).

Social interaction in public space is not equally appreciated by all women, or in all public spaces, however. For example, in interviews, many women minimized the significance of social interaction with strangers in outdoor, natural environments. In contrast, women frequently valued social interaction with strangers in churches and playgrounds (see also Day, 1999a).

In their use of public space, women provide care for themselves, such as through exercise, recreation, retreat, and education (see also Deem, 1986; Wilson, 1991; Samdahl & Jekubovich, 1997). Interview respondents frequently described using public spaces to 'take care' of themselves:

I like to go to the library now... To me, they are a nurturing place to go, and I am comfortable in

them, because I know how to use the system. I know how to do research in them, and things like that. It's the place I can be the 'academic' me that I want to be. Either I will be doing it for something academic, or else it will be a personal goal that I will be trying to work on. (Woman, aged 26-35)

(Describing a coffee shop), I love that place. . . The atmosphere, the dim lighting, the coffee, the smell of coffee, It's very nice. . . There's no association with work or school or anything. You just go there to relax and have your coffee, and just talk. Talk about life. That's what my roommate and I have done. . . I don't have to think about anything. Because I'm sitting there, and I'm drinking my coffee, and it just feels, it feels, it does feel safe. (Woman, aged 18-25)

Such activities return balance to women's lives and restore a sense of identity (Bialeschki & Michener, 1994). In situations of choice, control, and self-determination, women's use of public spaces to care for themselves may challenge restrictive social roles and norms (hooks, 1990; Shaw, 1994). Extending care to oneself is a fundamental tenet of the ethic of care.

Caring for self provides an impetus for reducing constraints on women's public space use. As Gilligan emphasizes (1982), women cannot avoid responsibility for their actions by blaming decisions on others' needs and preferences:

To the extent that women perceive themselves as having no choice, they correspondingly excuse themselves from the responsibility that decision entails. Childlike in the vulnerability of their dependence and consequent fear of abandonment, they claim to wish only to please, but in return for their goodness they expect to be loved and cared for. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 67)

Assuredly, many constraints women face in public spaces are not self-imposed. Yet researchers typically discuss constraints on women in public space—lack of time, household responsibilities, etc.—as though these were circumstances over which women had no choice and no control. In fact, women's decisions sometimes reinforce their primary responsibility for caring, or minimize their own preferences and needs. Such choices reinforce constraints on women's public space activity. Reducing constraints on women's use of public space requires, among other things, that women acknowledge that they do have choices. In making choices, women must promote shared responsibility for care-giving, and must prioritize caring for themselves as well as for others.

Women's use of public space generates opportunities to give and receive care from public spaces. Some behaviors can be understood as women's

efforts to sustain relationships with particular places or entire cities. In interviews, a few women characterized their selection of public spaces as the result of ethical decisions:

When I used to go to that little store, the local bookstore that was small, I always would buy a book, because I felt like they needed my business. . . Those little tiny stores, I think, those people need our business, and you should take care, you need to support them. . . I feel like they do need us. (Woman, aged 46-55)

(Describing why she shops at a particular mall) Because I live and work in Santa Ana, and I like to patronize the businesses that are in my community. (Woman, aged 36-45)

Many women's involvement in environmental and urban movements—such as historic preservation (*cf.* Bland, 1989; Dubrow, 1989; Hayden, 1995); ecofeminism (*cf.* Noddings, 1984; Fox, 1994; Salleh, 1997); peace movements (*cf.* Ruddick, 1989; Weisman, 1992); and community activism (*cf.* Boulding, 1981; Reinharz, 1984; Gilkes, 1988; Wolfe & Strachan, 1988; Feldman & Stall, 1994; Hinsdale *et al.* 1995) — may be understood as extensions of caring to encompass the community, the natural environment, and the world. For example, the work of Charlestonian preservationist Sue Front is attributed in part to her attachment to the city and its people (Bland, 1989).

Her appreciation of Charleston architecture. . . was founded on a sentimental love for the old city. She saw it partly through a golden haze of memory and association, not only for its buildings, and streets, and vistas, but also for those men and women she had known, or of whom she had been told, who dwelt here, and created, through a period of many generations, the town wherein she herself was privileged to dwell . . . She never lost this personal feeling for the spirit, as well as the body, of Charleston (Deas, 1962, p. 1; in Bland, 1989).

Likewise, an ethic of care creates possibilities for enhancing sense of community through women's public space activities. Caring for public spaces and the people in them also empowers women by developing their skills and giving them voice (Henderson & Allen, 1991). Such is the claim for the activities of many historic and contemporary women's clubs (*cf.* de Bretteville, 1980; Rock, 1981). Public spaces, in turn, may support activities that women interpret as caregiving (e.g. support groups, beauty treatments). 'Caring' public spaces may be among those women favor, as discussed later.

Finally, the ethic of care partially explains some possibilities presented by feminist utopian environments. Feminist utopian plans for housing, public spaces, neighborhoods, and cities frequently share a focus on care-giving and sustaining relationships as a central, rather than a peripheral concern (Hayden, 1981; Franck, 1989; Franck & Ahrentzen, 1989; Weisman, 1992; Schneekloth, 1994). Many utopian environments blur boundaries between public and private spaces. Centralized cooking and eating places, homes designed for groups of friends and their children, neighborhoods that facilitate child care—such places extend care-giving outside of the single family home, and reinforce commitments beyond the nuclear family (*cf.* Hayden, 1981; Weisman, 1992). When asked to imagine fantasy environments for themselves, women's own utopias highlight caring for self—in accommodating privacy, safety, and personal fulfillment—and give special importance to maintaining relationships with friends, children, and romantic partners (Birkby, 1981; Weisman, 1992). In sum, then, through women's use of public space, the ethic of care creates possibilities to give and receive care and to maintain relationships.

As the preceding discussion attests, the ethic of care provides a useful synthesizing framework within which to understand many aspects of women's use of public spaces. Next, the ethic of care is examined in terms of two specific areas of research on women and public space: preference and fear of crime. These discussions are intended to demonstrate the utility of the ethic of care, and to generate ideas for future research and reinterpretation of existing findings. These discussions are intended to be illustrative rather than conclusive.

Women's preferences for public spaces and the ethic of care

Environmental preference is not dependent on individual motivations alone. For many women, the ethic of care—specifically, the desire to maintain relationships, and to exercise and experience caring—presents important motivations for preference of public spaces.

Resolving conflicts between personal preferences and the ethic of care

Design and design research often conceptualize public spaces as if these were experienced separately by discrete 'user groups' (children, older adults, etc.). Yet people do not use public spaces

within the confines of their 'user group' only. An ethic of care generates conflicting preferences for some women, following from their desire to put others first, and their wish to care for themselves in public space:

It's my neighborhood park, that's why I go there. . . I go there because of my kids. . . To be honest with you, I'm so indifferent about it because I go there because of my kids. They don't have much—they have like baseball and all that—that they don't, they don't have much for adults. So I take the kids there. (Woman, aged 26–35)

I go to Chuck E. Cheese (kids' pizza parlor and video arcade). . . I'll read my book there. And I know they (kids) can run around, but it's too noisy, and I don't like, I'm getting older. I can't digest greasy food. So I just sit there. . . But they really like it. (Woman, aged 46–55)

We used to go a lot to the Cheesecake Factory. I like the food . . . People dress nice. It makes you feel good to be in that kind of atmosphere. . . Every time we used to go, we would have to wait at least an hour. . . [later] The reason we don't go to Cheesecake Factory is my husband. I don't mind the wait. He doesn't want to wait. So sometimes, I do change in that way. (Woman, aged 36–45)

The value many women place on maintaining social relationships (Colley, 1984) may generate conflicts for women's experience of public space. Oldenburg (1989; based on Fullerton, 1977) asserts that men have become overly dependent on women's company in using public spaces. Beginning in the 20th century, he claims, residential and economic mobility in the U.S. forced middle-class men to substitute wife or girlfriend 'sidekicks' for standing groups of male comrades. This shift detracted from male-only public spaces, which were steadily displaced by couple-oriented activities and places, including the home. Women, Oldenburg argues, have been more astute in sustaining relationships with their female companions, so as not to rely solely on male partners for social interaction. Though Oldenburg does not discuss it, women's multiple relationships also invoke responsibilities. Being a husband or boyfriend's sole companion may exacerbate women's stress from conflicting obligations and preferences.

Women adopt various strategies to resolve conflicting preferences in public space. Sometimes, women's activities reflect joint—rather than individual—preferences. Activities may thus be selected to reinforce relationships (see also research on family leisure, including Bella, 1989; Crawford &

Godbey, 1987; Freysinger, 1994; Horna, 1993; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Shaw, 1992, 1997; Wearing, 1994).

Cerritos Bowling Alley...we belong to a league, for which we belong to for 10 years...We know everybody there, we've been there so long. My husband and I bowl together, so it's like our family thing that we do together. (Woman, aged 56-65)

I think having kids has a big influence on the kinds of spaces that we use, because the time that I am not working, I usually spend with my family and my kids...We tend to do things that we don't have to leave kids behind. (Woman, aged 36-45)

The last time we went (to the zoo), we took my daughter and her friends... It just was so fun seeing the different animals and seeing how they interact with each other, and the children are so happy when they are there. And then we are (with) older children, but we were having such a good time, and it was a good time for bonding among all the generations. (Woman, aged 46-55)

Some women exercise care for self and others by selecting public places that simultaneously meet diverse preferences, offering 'something for everyone'. In interviews, women with partners and/or young children often preferred such places:

I like Fashion Island (shopping mall) because of all the, mainly my children have a lot of fun in those fountains, and playing with the water. And we do some shopping sometimes there. There's a bookstore, and there's a home furnishing place that my husband and I like to go in there, you know, dream about a lot of that stuff. You know, obviously, I end up always running in and out in one of those apparel stores, while my husband, he doesn't like shopping. But, you know, he's more than happy to go in the pet store and look at the frogs and the snakes, which I'm not...very interested in, while I go do some girl shopping kind of deal. There's a little bit of everything for everybody. (Woman, aged 36-45)

Such family or communal use of public space can generate powerful, positive associations (hooks, 1990; Soja, 1996), as one Mexican American woman described:

I come from a big family, and you kind of have to compromise. 'Okay, well, we'll do the beach. We can do coffee later'... I feel that, in this country, it's (seen as) negative, but I have more of a collective self, and not so much individual. Because of my family, I think---I'm who I am because of them. Not just me. So places, if it makes them happy, I want---'Let's go. We'll go there'. But see, we like the same things, so it's not like 'Oh, I have to do what you guys want'. No, because we like the same things... That swap meet (at) the Sports Arena that I was talking about? We love it. We all love it. (Woman, aged 18-25)

Not all group or family public space activities reflect women's preferences, however. In fact, family activities often constitute a great deal of work and stress for women, given women's frequent responsibility for children and for ensuring other's happiness (*cf.*, Bella, 1989; Shaw, 1992, 1994). Women's preferences for family public spaces may be shaped, in part, by peer pressure to be a 'good parent', a position increasingly distinguished by child-centeredness (Valentine, 1996*b*). As Valentine describes, contemporary mothers (and fathers) position themselves as friends and confidantes to their children, especially in middle-class households. Social pressure may encourage women to prioritize activities that promote friendship with their children. In contrast, in interviews, most women without romantic partners or young children reported no or few conflicts over preference for public spaces.

Additional research is needed to understand the circumstances under which women experience conflicting preferences in public space, their choices of strategies for coping with conflict, and the consequences of various coping strategies for women and others. Research should focus on the nature of relationships (romantic, parental, other; homosexual vs heterosexual; etc.), and on individual and group characteristics—such as race/ethnicity, class, and stage of life cycle—that shape how relationships are experienced. Research should investigate circumstances under which women are most able to include themselves as a focus of caring in public space.

Preferred public spaces may feature caring design and employees

In interviews, many women described preferences for public spaces that demonstrated caring and kindness, through design and through employees and others in the space. Descriptions often emphasized social aspects of favored places. Preferred public places graciously accommodated interaction with friends, family, and strangers. Such places anticipated and met women's needs, including their psychological needs. The best example was Barnes and Nobles bookstores—the most universally well-liked public spaces these middle-class women discussed. Many women characterized Barnes and Nobles bookstores as thoughtfully designed with patrons in mind, evidenced by the provision of sofas and comfortable chairs for reading, easy access to rest rooms, fresh coffee, and the use of warm wood, thick carpeting, and natural light throughout.

Likewise, women depicted bookstore employees as helpful, friendly, and anxious to make patrons feel comfortable and welcome:

I feel very welcome, even if there's no one there to say hello. Just the books say hello. And I like it that they have places to sit down, and (that's) probably the best innovation that they've made it, that's a place where you want to browse for a book. That courtesy of allowing you to browse (for) a book does more to make you buy than if you have to stand there, then your feet hurt, it's not comfortable. I think they are becoming more user-friendly in that they say, 'What would someone want if they were in this bookstore?' (Woman, aged 56-65)

I like the way they set it up to make you feel comfortable. They have chairs, they have tables. They kind of make, it makes you feel like they want you to be there. You know, they encourage you to browse and kind of hang out. (Woman, aged 46-55)

Barnes and Nobles, I think they're friendly and knowledgeable and very helpful. I think that they're there to help you, not just to ring you up and check you out... I've never had anybody give me a bad look, you know, because my child pulled five books out. (Woman, aged 26-35)

In contrast, several women disliked Starbucks coffee shops, in part because of what they interpreted as a lack of caring and insensitivity to social interactions evidenced in the design and in the employees and others in the space:

There aren't as many tables, and the tables might have the tall stools, which with no backs to stools, so obviously you're not going to sit there as long. (Woman, aged 36-45)

With Starbucks, I don't really feel that I can just sit there and reflect... One thing—this is kind of strange—that they serve coffee in a paper cup, so it's made to go. And the counter at Starbucks is the focus, rather than the tables. And so it's more of like, you go up, you pay, you leave. (Woman, aged 18-25)

The people that work there, they're kind of snobby. Yeah, they're like, they're not very nice. Well, for example, one time we went, and we ordered some cappuccinos, I can't remember, and we sat down, and they never told us our cappuccinos were ready... I thought, 'Huh, that was, that was not nice'. (Woman, aged 18-25)

When I go to (other coffee shop), people are, you know, 'Do you need a chair? We're not using this one'. And they're friendly... People at Starbucks are like, 'This is my chair', even if they're not using it. (Woman, aged 18-25)

Several women noted that few tables were provided, and that these were crowded together. Women disliked design feature they felt were intended to discourage lingering, and those that impeded social interaction, by making it difficult to visit with friends or to have private conversations. Likewise, several women described Starbucks employees or customers as unfriendly or thoughtless, though other women disagreed. Women's preference for Starbucks coffee shops often hinged on whether they perceived others there as sociable and helpful or not.

Social interaction and 'caring' design and employees are not of equal importance to all women, or for all public spaces. Future research should investigate where and when women most value 'caring' social and physical characteristics, how preference for 'caring' environments varies among women, and which design and social features best communicate 'caring' in various settings. Additionally, some women found 'caring' physical and social features somewhat insincere. After all, the goal of such features is typically to encourage consumption, not simply to promote care (*cf.* Crawford, 1992, on shopping malls). Nevertheless, even sceptical women often appreciated the presence of 'caring' amenities and behaviors. One question is therefore how to impart lessons from 'caring', consumption-oriented places to other public spaces.

Women's fear of crime in public spaces and the ethic of care

Fear in public space—especially women's fear—has been much examined in environment-behavior research and theory. Explanations link fear to racism (Davis, 1981; Merry, 1981; Feagin, 1991; St John, 1995; Day, 1999a; 1999b); break-down of territorial control (Newman, 1972; Taylor, 1987; Skogan, 1990); the anomie of urban life (Wirth, 1938; Lofland, 1973); and the presence of physical features that facilitate crime (*cf.* Newman, 1972; Kirk, 1988; Fisher & Nasar, 1992; Nasar & Fisher, 1992; Wekerle & Whitzman, 1995; Day 1999b). Structurally, fear is conceptualized as a force that maintains racial tension and social inequality (Davis, 1981, 1991; hooks, 1995; Blakely & Snyder, 1997; Day, 1999a), and as a form of social control over women's use of public space (Deegan, 1987; Gordon & Riger, 1989; Valentine, 1992; Day, 1994, 1995, 1997; Gardiner, 1994, 1995).

Drawing on several of these perspectives, the ethic of care provides new insight into women's fear.

The ethic of care constrains women's use of public spaces, by heightening women's perceived vulnerability, and by extending women's fear to encompass apprehension for children and others. At the same time, the ethic of care suggests possibilities for reducing fear and enhancing safety in public space, by extending care beyond the individual to the broader community.

Ethic of care may heighten women's vulnerability and fear towards strangers

The ethic of care may help explain women's fear of strangers in public space. Women, as a group, are regarded as 'socially open' in public space (Gardiner, 1980). Compared with men, women smile more, listen more, talk less, self-disclose more, are more emotionally expressive, are more likely to move out of the way, take up less space, and are approached more often by strangers (Henley, 1977; Nager & Nelson-Schulman, 1980). Henley (1977) identifies many gender norms for 'feminine' public behavior as signals of women's lower social status. Women, however, may understand some such behaviors as courtesies and friendliness towards strangers and others in public space. Many of women's gendered public behaviors are consistent with the ethic of care's emphasis on sustaining relationships, taking care of others, and making sure no-one is left alone. Women typically may not intend openness in public space as welcoming of sexual advances (Henley, 1977). When it is misinterpreted or preyed upon, friendliness may lead to women's fear in public spaces (Nager & Nelson-Schulman, 1980). In interviews, women noted several instances in which 'niceness' in public space prompted their fear for safety:

Me and my cousin, at home, we went to this downtown area we're not from, in the city... Every time we went to the public library, we would be harassed by different people... It was scary, because you don't know what these people will do. We would talk to them because we are nice... [later] And I'm sure it's because both of us were grown, were brought up with, you know, you just be nice to people. (Woman, aged 18-25)

This guy came up, and he asked me for money, and I gave a quarter or dollar to make phone calls. Then he came up to me in the parking lot, no one was there, and he had this thing. And he said, 'I have a gun, get into the back seat'... So now, probably in the back of my mind, if I'm in an open space, especially at night or dark, I just, you don't know what could happen, and I do think it's kind of scary. (Woman, aged 46-55)

Women may seek to reduce fear and eliminate danger by withdrawing from interaction and caring in public space (Nager & Nelson-Schulman, 1980). If this means learning to smile only when happy, to stand one's ground, and to make direct eye contact, so much the better for women's assertiveness and independence. Yet others of women's public behaviors—emotional expressiveness, self-disclosure, listening, approachability—facilitate communication and promote social interaction, sense of community, and a climate of citizenship. Such behaviors may be devalued precisely because of their association with caring, which is accorded little real societal importance, beyond 'lip service' (Tronto, 1993; Clement, 1996). Rather than discourage these caring behaviors in women, the value of such behaviors should be acknowledged, and behaviors should be encouraged among both women and men (Henley, 1977). Removing the vulnerability associated with caring depends upon increasing the status of caring.

The ethic of care extends women's fear in public space to encompass children and others

Existing research on fear in public space considers gender differences, but largely overlooks relationships. Women and men differ in the amount and the nature of their fear in public space (Baumer, 1978; Gordon & Riger, 1989). Consideration of gender differences is therefore necessary, but insufficient, to understand the experience of fear. Most research on women's fear in public space focuses on women's fear for personal safety (*cf.* Gordon & Riger, 1989; Fisher & Nasar, 1992; Nasar & Fisher, 1992; Day, 1999b), especially fear of sexual assault. Characteristics associated with women's fear include macro- and micro-scale physical features (e.g. poor public transportation, bushes, low lighting) and social features (e.g. racial/ethnic composition of the nearby area, presence of homeless people). Much research on women's fear takes place on college campuses. Studies often emphasize the experiences of women students (*cf.* Day, 1999b; Fisher & Nasar, 1992; Leach *et al.*, 1986)—a population less likely to have children.

The individual focus of much research on women's fear may belie how many women evaluate danger and safety. Because their experience of public space is often one of interconnectedness and responsibility for others, women may not neatly separate fear for themselves from other feelings of fear. For example, women's high fear of crime, despite their low (compared to men) risk of victimization,

has been attributed to women's high concern for community and its preservation (Garofalo & Laub, 1978).⁷

Fear for children was foremost in the minds of many women interviewed, when asked about safe and unsafe public spaces. Women's evaluation of public spaces with respect to their children raised concerns different from those associated with fear for personal safety. Parents' fear for children in public space centers on so-called 'stranger danger' (assault, abduction, murder) and accidents (Valentine, 1996b). In interviews, women with small children often feared crowded or confusing places where children could be lost or approached by strangers. Women with slightly older children related fear to places where children might be approached by 'tough' teens or adults, abductors or assailants, or drug users (see also Valentine, 1996a, 1996b, 1997a, 1997b):

South Coast Plaza (shopping mall), to me, it's too confusing, and too big. Plus I have read stories long ago, about children and boys in the bathroom molested. You know, as a parent, once you become a parent, your ears and eyes are like antennas. You start looking at things that way. (Woman, aged 36-45)

Where ever we do go, we're always making sure that we're protective of our child. We don't let him run around more than five feet in front of me. To me, if you have your child 100 feet in front of you, that's not safe. (Woman, aged 26-35)

She'll say, 'I want to go to Dave's Roller or ice rink', or whatever it was... All right, I understand that. But that also attracts bums. I know that too. Skating rinks—molesters. They know that's where little kids are. So I try to go there first, and kind of scope it out. Say, 'Okay, who's here? What kind of cars are parked here? Why is that guy hanging around? He was here when I got here'... [and later] Even though we're in a safe neighborhood, I know how things change. I know how quickly one of them could get hit by a car. I don't worry just about crime—getting hit by cars, earthquakes, bicycle wreck, the whole deal. (Woman, aged 36-45)

The same places, though perhaps disliked, may not register among women considering only personal safety. In evaluating danger, women respondents with children simultaneously adopted one or more possible filters—self and/or children.

Future research on fear in public space may benefit from a broader perspective, one that situates women's and men's experiences more centrally in the context of their relationships with children and others. Valentine (1997a) models this contextual perspective in her research on adults' perceptions of

children's safety in public space. She finds that perceptions of safety vary depending on parents' gender (mothers vs fathers) and also on the nature of parents' relationships to children ('natural' vs 'social' parents—such as step-parents or romantic partners of single parents). Valentine's research illustrates the complex and interacting ways in which relationship shapes perceptions of fear in public space. Future research on fear in public space should adopt such an approach.

The ethic of care suggests possibilities for reducing fear and enhancing safety

The ethic of care contains both the seeds and the solutions for many aspects of women's fear in public space. Gilligan (1982) locates the origins of women's perceptions of fear and violence in the breakdown of caring:

For women, aggression is tied to the fracture of human connection. The activities of care make the social world safe, by avoiding isolation and preventing aggression, rather than by seeking rules to limit its extent. (Gilligan, 1982, p. 42)

She contends that, for many women, relationships provide the means to ensure safety. Gilligan is not alone in this assertion. Ward (1988) reaches the same conclusion in her research with low income teens from diverse racial/ethnic groups: those who adopt an ethic of care interpret violence as the result of the breakdown of relationships. In a related conclusion, Rohe and Burby (1988) maintain that those with strong social ties to the community are less fearful, since social cohesion decreases worry about others coming to one's aid. Theories of fear of crime based on territoriality, such as defensible space theory (Newman, 1972) and broken window theory (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), stress the need for a strong sense of community and shared identity among neighbors to reduce crime and fear. According to these theories, cohesive communities preserve safety by defending against outsiders, and by discouraging social and physical incivilities. Similarly, the popularity of privately-owned public spaces is associated with perceived safety among those regarded as 'insider', in part because of the presence of proprietors and others who are responsible for patrons' well-being (Day, 1999a; also see Whyte, 1980).

Crime prevention efforts that focus on relationships and community may enhance women's perceived safety in public spaces. Women's shuttle services are one such solution, in which safe

transportation is conceptualized as a need shared by women as a group, not only by individuals. Related 'communal' strategies include defensible space modifications that reinforce territoriality, such as breaking down the building scale into small units, so that building residents learn to recognize each other and to challenge outsiders. Such strategies distinguish between the community of 'insiders', to whom caring is extended (neighborhood, housing project, other women, etc.), and others, against whom insiders must defend or be protected.

Perhaps the greatest potential—and the greatest challenge—for reducing fear and enhancing safety in public space lies with strategies that extend caring even further, engulfing both 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. Safety strategies that strive to this standard embody the ethic of care's concern for avoiding isolation and sustaining relationship. Such actions often seek to change the fundamental, underlying conditions conducive to fear and crime (Day, 1995). For example, in her analysis of race prejudice and fear of crime in a racially-diverse housing complex, Merry (1981) asserts that reducing fear of crime associated with race prejudice requires increased personal knowledge of members of unlike racial/ethnic groups. Personal information, she maintains, is needed to differentiate the few potential criminals or aggressors from all others in a feared group.⁸ Another example of this more encompassing caring is the effort by some urban universities to enhance perceived safety on campus by improving the well-being of surrounding neighborhoods and neighbors (*cf.* Mangan, 1991). In such programs, campus resources are used to help meet local residents' needs—for safety, as well as for jobs, housing, etc. Safety is constructed as a concern for the entire neighborhood, not just the campus. Reduced fear and lowered crime are viewed as dependent upon strengthening relationships with the surrounding community, and extending caring to encompass 'feared' others.

Conclusions

This paper advances the ethic of care as a theoretical framework within which to understand many aspects of women's use and perception of public space. The ethic of care could be extended to explore the public space experiences of many women and men in working class and low income communities, and in communities of color that support an ethic of care. Additionally, adopting an ethic of care may advance new ways of thinking about public space de-

sign and planning, policy, and activism. This recommendation stands in contrast with much recent U.S. public space activism, scholarship, and policy making, which is more closely aligned with an ethic of justice. Popular, political, and academic debates on public space explore the tension between individuals' rights and the rights of others in public space: U.S. First Amendment rights of free speech and assembly in privately owned public spaces (*cf.* Gottdiener, 1986; Lewis, 1990; Shields, 1990); teenagers' and children's rights in the face of curfew laws, skateboarding and roller blading prohibitions, and anti-loitering ordinances (*cf.* Drucker & Gumpert, 1996; Valentine, 1996b); homeless and poor people's rights to camp and 'pan handle' in public space (Glaberson, 1989; Davis, 1991; Appeals court voids Santa Ana ban on camping by homeless', 1994; 'New Orleans considers anti-camping law to deter homeless', 1995; Will, 1995); attempts to legislate civility and decency in taxi cabs, adult clubs, and on the streets (Smith, 1991; 'No sex, please, we're Olympian', 1996; 'Ruthless in New York', 1997; Lopez, 1998a; Tomasky, 1998); rights to accessibility for people with disabilities (*cf.* Bone, 1991; Maslen, 1992; Bricker, 1995); rights of smokers vs those of nonsmokers (*cf.* Moore, 1988; Slade, 1993; Platt, 1994; Cardador, *et al.*, 1995; Shenk, 1997; 'Freedom's last gasp: California', 1998; Lopez, 1998b)—the list continues.

This focus on public space rights has produced important advances. With these advances, however, come significant shortcomings. Issues that can be framed in terms of 'rights' may not be the greatest problems in public space. For example, battles for the right to protest in shopping malls fit this description for many people. Yet, because of the unsustainability of their moral underpinnings (at least among some audiences), it is these battles that may be waged by public space scholars or policy makers. Other pressing public space issues may be bypassed if they cannot be articulated convincingly as 'rights'. Lack of recreational space for teenagers may be such an issue (*cf.* Ladd, 1982; Hamilton, 1999). The 'right to hang-out' is not a convincing moral imperative. Similarly, public spaces themselves may be neglected because places are rarely regarded as entitled to 'rights'.

Solutions derived from an emphasis on public space rights also warrant examination. Policy makers and activists are often charged with ignoring particular concerns to advance universal rights. For example, U.S. small business owners, historic preservationists, and wildlife enthusiasts complain that, in passing the Americans with Disabilities

Act, legislators ignored other concerns while mandating physical accessibility for people with disabilities (*cf.* Bricker, 1995). Increasing public space rights frequently requires legislative and judicial action; other avenues for accomplishing objectives may thus be underutilized. For example, legal battles to preserve the right to 'pan handle' in subway stations and other public spaces (Glaberson, 1989) should arguably form only one small part of more comprehensive activities to address the fundamental problem of poverty in the U.S. Finally, rights secured by legal or policy initiatives are not always the best possible 'solutions' to the problems they target. For example, winning poor people the right to camp in downtown parks falls far short of resolving the problem of insufficient safe and affordable housing.

Associated shortcomings do not discount the importance of an ethic of justice in public space. However, the ethic of care should be adopted as a useful complement and/or alternative to the focus on public space rights. Hockenberry (1995) provides an excellent example contrasting the two approaches, in discussing accessibility in public spaces as a wheelchair user. In the U.S., Hockenberry found, people depend upon the physical environment to provide access for people with disabilities; individuals assume no personal responsibility to help others reach places. Hence, one can easily go only to those places where the 'right' to access is secure—places legally mandated to be accessible. In Palestine, in contrast, Hockenberry found few places with 'accessible' architecture, yet he could go most places. Helping him was viewed as a responsibility by the people who carried him up stairs, put him on donkeys, and pushed him over rough roads:

The surprise about working in the Middle East was just how much easier it was in so many ways than living in America. In America, access is always about architecture and never about human beings. Among Israelis and Palestinians, access was rarely about anything but people. (Hockenberry, 1995, p. 262)

Without romanticizing caring or minimizing the value of accessible design, one should acknowledge the potential contributions of an ethic of care to enhancing well-being in public space. Few would deny, in this example, the need for both approaches. As noted earlier, tension between 'rights' and 'caring' may be especially problematic for middle class audiences; for many U.S. people of color and for low income groups, an ethic of care represents the predominant ethical orientation.

Though caring has been most often examined as a criterion for moral decisions in the 'private realm' of personal relationships, feminist scholars argue convincingly for the blurring of the private/public dichotomy (*cf.* Hayden, 1984; Salem, 1986; Rose, 1993; Churchman & Altman, 1994; Feldman & Stall, 1994), and for the centrality of caring as a model for public moral decisions (Tronto, 1993; Clement, 1996). To shape public decisions, care must be defined broadly, actively, and politically (Tronto, 1993). Relevant principles of 'political' caring should be distilled from conceptions of caring in personal relationships (Clement, 1996). Black feminist scholars offer encouragement and models for this effort, noting that, in black communities, caring has long been a central facet of urban public space, and of public and political life (Stacks, 1990; Collins, 1991; Scruggs, 1993). A political ethic of care towards public spaces must include several criteria: (1) decisions regarding public spaces should focus on specific circumstances, not only universal principles and standards. The most caring course of action will only be obvious in the context of a particular situation—a specific space, groups of users, location, political situation, etc. (2) Decisions regarding public spaces should accept responsibility for helping to maintain relationships. Rather than addressing discrete 'user groups', design and design research should regard people as connected, and should strive to make decisions that leave no-one out. (3) Decisions should be judged not by whether they avoid harm, but by whether they actively extend caring and well-being. In the face of competing needs and preferences, alternate decisions should be weighed against the kind and amount of well-being each would produce. The care of spaces themselves should also be considered. Such an approach to public spaces may resonate with people for whom the ethic of care is a primary way of making moral decisions, including many women.

Notes

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(2) In 1990, 49 per cent of U.S. women were engaged in wage work outside of the home (compared to 60% of men) (U.S. Census Bureau, 1998). Additionally, the trend towards post-suburban (decentralized) geography in the U.S. and in some other Western countries (*cf.* Soja, 1989; Davis, 1991; Garreau, 1991; Watson & Gibson, 1995) means

that many women no longer experience rigid divisions between urban (public) and suburban (private) environments.

- (3) Chodorow's theory of object relations has received similar criticisms (Collins, 1991).
- (4) The burden and the meaning of caring varies with race/ethnicity and class, as well as with marital and parental status (*cf.* Woodward & Green, 1988; Henderson & Bialeschki, 1991; Preston *et al.*, 1993; Blumen, 1994).
- (5) Likewise, justice is required in decision-making in the 'personal' domain of the home (Clement, 1996).
- (6) 'Public spaces' refer loosely to generally-accessible places outside of the home, which are used on a temporary basis (after Franck & Paxson, 1989). Women's use of public spaces includes activities such as recreation, travel, exercise, and errands, as well as some aspects of household and wage work. For women, at least, adoption of a 'universal' continuum between public- and private-spaces (e.g. based only on ownership of the space, or on the nature of social relationships) is not necessarily meaningful. The perceived publicness of spaces must be considered in the context of characteristics of particular spaces and users (including characteristics such as function of the space, race and class characteristics of the individual and of other users, characteristics of the broader geographic location, etc.) (see Day, 1999a).
- (7) Women's high fear in public space is also due to specific fear of sexual assault (Gordon & Riger, 1989).
- (8) For people of color, 'race fear' stems from race prejudice, and also from historical and contemporary, race-motivated violence committed by white and non-white people against people of color (Davis, 1981). Increased personal information may be useful for distinguishing potential hate crime-offenders and race oppressors from others.

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