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Constructing Space and Time for Work and Family: A Structuration Perspective on Bed and Breakfasts

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how bed and breakfast owners communicatively construct privacy while operating a business out of their personal home. One hundred eighty-two B&B owners from 20 U.S. states and 20 countries responded to an electronic qualitative questionnaire that, in part, explored the issue of privacy. Three themes emerged from the data, including: traditional organizational structures, perception of availability, and banking of time and space. These themes revealed that the owners of the nontraditional businesses relied upon recognizable organizational structures used in more traditional organizations to create and maintain private space and time. They also engaged in communication with their guests that simultaneously enabled and constrained their sense of privacy. Finally, the owners reported using intrapersonal communication strategies that allowed them to account for the lack of privacy during peak-season, though these strategies may have unintended consequences in terms of family roles and mental and physical health.

The bed and breakfast industry is worth an estimated 3.4 billion dollars (Professional Association of Innkeepers International, 2010). This amount stems from the approximately 17,000 bed and breakfasts operated in the United States, and then expands to include the products and services necessary to operate these establishments successfully. The bed and breakfast industry, like most tourism-based businesses, is highly dependent on forces such as the economy (e.g., energy costs, consumer spending, access to credit) technology (e.g., social networking, web development), social issues, and political factors such as laws or taxes specific to travel and lodging.

The majority of bed and breakfasts worldwide are located in more rural areas. Numerous studies have indicated that many bed and breakfasts are opened to support the main farm business the family engages in (e.g., Pearce, 1990; World Tourism Organization, 1997). A secondary reason for venturing into the bed and breakfast business is as a sideline or hobby

(Kousis, 1989; Lynch, 1996; Oppermann, 1997). Finally, desired lifestyle is identified as a rationale for opening a bed and breakfast (McKercher, 1998). Of particular interest to the current study is the desire of some bed and breakfast owners to be able to manage work and family by creating a home-based business.

The Professional Association of Innkeepers International (2010) estimated that 72% of inn owners are couples and 79% of owners live on premise. Bed and breakfasts confound “home” and “work” for the owners and family members, and thereby provide a rich context for research exploring the communicative challenges associated with operating a home-based business. In particular, bed and breakfast owners must confront the issue of personal and family privacy as they may regularly have paying guests in their personal homes.

This study explores how bed and breakfast owners communicatively manage work and family, particularly the issues of private time and space, and does so through the lens of structuration theory (Giddens, 1979). Structuration theory is well suited for the investigation of how individuals operate a business such as a bed and breakfast, which is a business that requires around the clock merging of work and family and public and private space.

Review of Literature

Work-Family Balancing

The U.S. Department of Education (2007) has projected that if the current educational trends continue by 2016 women will hold 60% of bachelor degrees, 63% of master degrees, and 54% of doctorate and other professional degrees. These changes in levels of education and concurrent shifts in social and cultural norms have led to dual-career families or dual-career couples being hot topics in academic journals, popular press newspapers, and HR offices around the globe. This prevalence does not mean, however, the balance of work and family is without conflict. In fact, many researchers are beginning to use the term “balancing” when discussing work and family rather than balance because the former implies the ongoing nature of the challenges whereas the latter indicates a static process that can somehow be completely achieved and maintained.

The challenges of work-family balancing can have negative effects when the roles of home clash with the roles of family. This clash can reduce satisfaction with life, marriage, personal relationships, and family (e.g., Greenhaus & Powell, 2003; Hammer, Bauer, & Grandey, 2003; Heilmann, Bell, & McDonald, 2009; Judge, Ilies, & Scott, 2006; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005). Other effects of work-family clash can include stress, depression, anxiety, or substance abuse (e.g., Frone, 2000; Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Parasuraman & Simmers, 2001), physical conditions like hypertension and ulcers (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1997), and dietary problems (Allen & Armstrong, 2006).

Not all research on work family-balancing has been negative. When work and family roles are compatible, the effects on both work life and family life can be positive. Greenhaus

and Powell (2006) argued successful balancing can be beneficial for an individual's mental and physical health. Balancing can also contribute to a person's overall sense of happiness, satisfaction (derived from successfully balancing what is often viewed as contradictory roles), and perceived quality of life (Rice, Frone, & McFarlin, 1992). One role can act as a buffer when another role is particularly challenging; instead of continuing to focus on a hard day at work, the individual can turn his or her attention to more positive spousal or parent-child interactions. Conversely, work can provide spouses or parents the opportunity to problem-solve complex tasks and interact on a professional level in a way they are unable to with their family members.

Implications of organizational work-family policies

Organizations continue to struggle with realistic policies that help individuals in this balancing process while maintaining overall organizational productivity. These policies and accommodations have included on-site dependent care, alternative workplaces, and flexible scheduling. Prior research indicates that gender and interactions with co-workers still greatly affect who will and will not utilize these policies. Allen and Russell (1999) found that men are much less likely to use family friendly policies; overall these policies are underutilized as well by single workers, and career-oriented mothers (Bailyn, Fletcher & Kolb, 1997). Consequently, although the policies do exist in many organizations, working parents are still conflicted as to how to balance their work and family obligations in such a way that satisfies their employers, their own desired career goals, as well as the needs of their families (Kirby, Golden, Medved, Jorgenson, & Buzzanell, 2003).

For example, organizations that offer an option to work from home provide an attractive alternative for those workers seeking to balance work and family. However, working from the home can cause some unexpected and often unanticipated challenges for individuals utilizing the option (e.g., Butler & Modaff, 2008; Duxbury et al., 1998; Felstead & Jewson, 2000). Role overload can occur as individuals attempt to simultaneously balance multiple roles. Time management can become a strain if one role or the other begins to dominate an individual; this can also occur as the boundaries between work and family blur in such a way that both roles are compromised. Constantly having work at home can decrease family time, leading to a negative impact on relationships at home. Many individuals still find that they need to seek childcare in order to successfully complete their work responsibilities, which can increase parental guilt over being at home while another individual cares for his or her child.

Family-owned business

One option for individuals who are balancing work and family is to eliminate external organizational pressures noted above and become an owner of a home-based business (e.g., Danes, Haberman, & McTavish, 2005; Danes & Olson, 2003; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, & Beutell, 1996). The deliberate merge of family and work requires a complex negotiation

whereby individuals must decide if the family system operates like a business or if their familial patterns “of behavior, values, beliefs, and expectations are unintentionally transferred to the work environment” (Danes, Haberman, & McTavish, 2005, p. 117). While the term “family business” is a contested term within the research (Sharma, Chrisman, & Chua, 1996), we will use family-owned business in a manner consistent with Getz and Nilsson (2004), a business owned and operated by a person, couple, or family.

Although much of the literature on small and family-owned businesses overlaps in terms of economic challenges and struggles, there are significant differences. Namely, these differences include the balance of family dynamics and business operations in areas such as gender roles, dealing with family problems, general family involvement (who is included and who is excluded), challenges of decision making and label granting power, and evolution of the business throughout the family life cycle (Getz & Carlsen, 1999).

Sharma et al, (1996) observed “family business goals are likely to be different from the firm-value maximization goal assumed for the publicly traded and professionally managed firms” (p. 9). Research has often looked at which role family-owned business owners will preference first. Will family take precedence over work or will work dominate family life? Singer and Donahu (1992) identified two approaches: a family-centered business whereby the business is a way of life and a business-centered family whereby the business is a means of income. Similarly, File, Prince, and Rankin (1994) categorized family businesses differentiating between those whose business had no involvement in family dynamics (one in which family concerns were met over business needs), and another type that placed adapting to changing conditions either in the family or in the business as the foremost concern.

The particular family-based business of interest to the current study is the bed and breakfast. As discussed earlier, bed and breakfasts create a situation where the owners tend to live on site, and as a result they face the constant need to balance work and family since they regularly have paying guests in their home. The owners repeatedly confront the need to balance family private space and time with the needs of their customers. How they do this is the concern of this study, and structuration theory is particularly useful for understanding how the owners manage a business that seemingly eradicates personal space, at least during peak season.

Structuration Theory

Structuration theory was developed by Giddens (1979) in an attempt to explain the intricate interrelations between macro-level organizational structures and micro-level interactions. In explaining the relationship between structures and interactions, Giddens argued that “[t]o study the structuration of a social system is to study the ways in which the system, via the application of generative rules and resources, and in the context of unintended outcomes, is produced and reproduced in the interaction” (p. 66). Structure is comprised of rules and resources that produce conditions that create, change, or maintain social systems through interactions.

The rules and routinized practices individuals enact in order to accomplish their daily lives are generally known by the individuals. As knowledgeable agents, individuals “know a great deal about the conditions and consequences of what they do in their day-to-day lives” (Giddens, 1984, p. 281). It is important to note that with this knowledge, individuals also possess agency, which according to Giddens (1979) means “at any point in time, the [individual] could have acted otherwise,” (p. 56). The nature of the action is irrelevant. The fact that the agent could choose to act one way or another implies some degree of agency within the structure.

Individuals may not have definite goals “consciously held in mind” during every interaction in which they engage (Giddens, 1979, p. 56). The knowledgeable individuals bring to an interaction may occasionally be more a result of intuition (i.e., relying on routinized rules and practices) than a calculated response to the situation (Stones, 2005). Giddens accounts for this with his assertion that individuals possess both a practical consciousness (those actions that an individual can engage but not explain) and discursive consciousness (those decisions and individual can discuss).

Although individuals are generally knowledgeable and purposeful, intentional conduct (i.e., choice) can have unintended consequences for agents during the course of the production and reproduction of social structure (Stones, 2005). These unintended consequences are not only involved in social reproduction, but also become conditions of action (i.e., agency). Unintended consequences are often contradictory, and become so when “those consequences are perverse in such a way that the very activity of pursuing an objective diminishes the possibility of reaching it,” (Giddens, 1984, p. 313). This is seemingly descriptive of the experiences that bed and breakfast owners face as they seek balancing strategies to help them negotiate family life in the public eye but under the guise of privacy of the home.

The following research question stems from the literature and guided the current study: *How do bed and breakfast owners communicatively construct space and time for family while serving the needs of customers staying in their personal home?*

Method

The current study was one aspect of a larger study exploring the communicative management of family life when work is performed primarily in the home. The context for the current study was owners of bed and breakfast establishments. The researchers gathered data through an on-line qualitative questionnaire from 182 bed and breakfast owners who operate or have operated establishments in the United States or internationally. To answer the current research question, participants were asked to describe their experiences with constructing private space and time with customers staying in their home, and what rules or policies they have established to help maintain their privacy.

Participants

The sample consisted of 182 bed and breakfast owners from the United States (n=123) and other countries (n=20); thirty-nine participants did not indicate their geographical location. The participants were from 20 states in the U.S., with California (n=27), Colorado (n=18), Wisconsin (n=15), and Arizona (n=11) being the most frequent. Twenty participants were from countries outside of the U.S., including: France (n=5), Brazil (n=3), Italy (n=3), Argentina (n=3), Canada (n=2), Australia (n=2), Peru (n=1), and Uruguay (n=1). Participants most typically had owned and/or operated their bed and breakfast for 4-7 years (27%), 1-3 years (22.4%), or 8-11 years (21.7%). The participants were mostly between the ages of 55-64 (40.3%) or 45-54 (27.1%). Seventy-two percent of the participants were female, while 28% were male, and 31.5% of the participants had two children living with them while they owned and/or operated the bed and breakfast. More than three-quarters of the participants were married or had a significant other (79.7%), and of those, 91.5% of the spouses/significant others were involved in the operation of the bed and breakfast.

Procedures

We created an on-line qualitative questionnaire using surveymonkey.com. The questionnaire was composed of 16 questions (nine closed and seven open-ended) in four sections: Overview, Maintaining a Relationship, Parenting & Running a Bed and Breakfast, and Demographics.

Participants were identified via internet searches. Some bed and breakfast owners were contacted directly through email via publically available websites. We asked them to complete the questionnaire, and then to consider sending the questionnaire link to other bed and breakfast owners. We contacted bed and breakfast professional association representatives around the world via email, described the project to them, and asked for their support. Several association representatives agreed to forward the email request for participation to their association members.

Data Analysis

Open-ended responses to the relevant questions on the qualitative questionnaire were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Both researchers independently read the responses several times to familiarize themselves with the data, and both made initial notes in the margins about issues of interest. We then worked together to underline each unit in every response that addressed the research question. Each complete unit was then cut-out and taped to a notecard, serving as an initial code for that unit.

We read each code and made piles based on content. Each code was compared to the others, and similar codes were grouped together. Similar groups of codes were combined until

the data could no longer be reduced. The remaining groups formed the themes that served as answers to the research question. The three themes that emerged from the data are discussed in the following section.

Results

Three themes emerged from the data in response to the research question: *traditional organizational structures*, *perception of availability*, and *banking time and space*. The three themes (and accompanying subthemes) revealed the multiple communicative means employed by bed and breakfast owners to create and maintain some semblance of privacy in light of opening the doors of their home to the public. Most of the respondents indicated establishing and maintaining privacy was indeed difficult, if not impossible at times. The importance of continuing to find ways to ensure some level of privacy, though, is evident in the words of one owner: “We feel we have made it this long (17 years) in the industry BECAUSE we established rules and policies to maintain our privacy. Everyone needs and deserves their own space and time, or burnout is inevitable.”

Traditional Organizational Structures

While bed and breakfasts are considered a nontraditional organizational form by most researchers, the owners reported employing relatively traditional organizational structures to help create and sustain a sense of privacy in their homes. This theme represents communicative means of distinguishing between public and private that can be found in most traditional organizations. In other words, the structures created by the owners of these nontraditional organizations are easily recognizable as structures used in traditional modern organizations to separate employees from customers, or members from non-members.

Bed and breakfast owners reported using written and oral communication to create and maintain structures that allowed them some sense of privacy and time to themselves, free from the presence, requests, demands, and needs of their guests. The traditional organizational structures that emerged from the data are represented by three sub-themes: *never open a closed door, unless it is a national emergency*, and *really have to leave to have private time*.

Never open a closed door

Many traditional organizations use physical structures such as closed doors, fences, signage, or locked gates to communicate to customers that certain spaces are private and not open to the public. While there is no explicit written or oral communication to customers about these boundaries, it is expected they understand and respect them. Bed and breakfast owners reported using similar structures to communicate implicitly to guests that certain spaces are off-

limits to them. One respondent, whose response provided the label for this sub-theme, articulated this point by saying:

It is a pretty standard B&B policy that guests should never open a closed door. The kitchen is also usually off limits. Guests are not allowed to use the back door (kitchen door), so that the back doorstep remains my private space—they have the use of the very large front veranda.

At times, a closed door is not enough, and owners reported locking doors to reinforce private areas. The bed and breakfast owners expect their guests recognize traditional organizational structures, such as a closed or locked door, and assign the same meaning they would in any other public business.

The existence of “open” or “common” areas in the bed and breakfast was also a structure many owners felt implied “closed” or “private” areas to which the guests did not have access.

For several owners, allowing the spaces to afford a sense of what is public and what is private was important and seemingly sufficient for maintaining privacy, though some did admit that there are guests who cannot or choose not to recognize those boundaries. Other owners were not so willing to leave their privacy to chance, and explicitly communicated to the guests (in writing, face-to-face, or both) what their rules are for utilizing the space in their home. One respondent who preferred to communicate with guests face-to-face wrote, “When we show them the house we explain that certain areas are ‘ours.’ We’ve never had a problem with a guest crossing our boundaries.”

Another structure employed by many bed and breakfast owners to reinforce the “closed door” and thereby their privacy was the use of signage. Respondents had many suggestions for the use of signs to establish boundaries, such as: “Innkeeper duties are finished for the day. See you in the morning.” “The Innkeepers are napping and please don’t ring the doorbell.” “Downstairs is private---please knock if you need anything.” “PRIVATE” was the most commonly used sign. Regardless of the channels used or how explicit/implicit they were in the structures they employed, most of the owners attempted to communicate to their guests that a closed door indicated a boundary between what was public and what was private.

Unless it is a national emergency

A traditional organizational structure that is used by some bed and breakfast owners to help maintain privacy in their home is the use of time restrictions. With the sub-theme, unless it is a national emergency, respondents reported attempting to set particular hours that they would/would not be available to their guests, thereby ensuring themselves some private time and space, barring some important need.

Specific check-in/check-out times, typically used by more traditional hospitality businesses, are employed by some owners to give themselves a few predictable hours of privacy every day. Some owners are quite strict about these times, while other owners are less strict, such as the following respondent who said: “We established a specific check in time, but are

lenient with requests for arrivals outside that time.” While strict check-in/check-out times may vary by owner, sometimes their best efforts fail: “We have a check in time in hopes that we can have an hour or two each afternoon after our work gets done, but about 1 out of every 4 groups ignores the ‘any time after 4’ rule.”

Instead of check-in/check-out times, some owners opt instead (or additionally) for communicating a “closing” time to their guests. Some owners are quite strong in the messages they send with the closing time, such as “please call us before 8PM unless it is a national emergency.” Other owners implement a “closing time,” but make it clear to their guests they are still accessible. Some owners did not have strict check-in/check-out times or specific “closing” times, but did attempt to carve out some time each day for themselves. These times were far more fluid than are typical of traditional organizational structures, but are recognizable by guests.

Leave to have private time

The last sub-theme for the traditional organizational structures theme represents the idea bed and breakfast owners ironically have to leave their home in order to get some privacy. While most workers in the traditional workforce find their privacy in their homes, bed and breakfast owners often are not afforded that opportunity, and employ the traditional organizational structure of “leaving the office” to get some private time and space. An owner described the sentiment this way: “set boundaries for your guests—time and physical space, but mostly you need to remove yourself from the premises to obtain that.” Another owner acknowledged that some communicative energy needs to be expended to account for the absence: “I just have to tell them that I have something important to do, and just simply excuse myself.”

Owners who have spouses or significant others involved in the running of the business may find themselves with a built-in substitute to carry the load during their absence, though finding time for both partners to slip away is difficult: “it’s hard to have a long period of time when all of us can have private time at the same time.” It may also be difficult to negotiate who gets time away from the business since the guests may be constantly present. One owner shared how she and her partner communicatively manage this delicate situation: “There have been a couple of occasions where my partner would have preferred to be alone. We’ve developed a little system for identifying those moments as they arise and gracefully excuse ourselves for the evening.”

The first theme in response to the research question reflects data indicating that bed and breakfast owners, despite running a non-traditional business, rely on traditional organizational structures to create and maintain private space and time. These traditional structures are recognizable by guests, though not always respected.

Perception of Availability

The second theme, perception of availability, represents the idea that bed and breakfast owners create and maintain privacy by making their guests feel that they are readily available and able to take care of their needs. While this may seem antithetical, the owners suggested that creating the perception they were available to the guests actually allowed the guests to feel more secure and be less needy, thereby creating more opportunities for private time and space. The data in this theme is represented by two sub-themes: *call us at any time*, and *identify their needs*.

Call us any time

Several of the bed and breakfast owners noted that providing the guests with their cell phone number, room telephone number, or access to an intercom served to create a sense of need satisfaction for the guests, thereby leading to more private space and time for themselves. A respondent indicated her satisfaction with this system when she wrote, "Guests in house are given a cell phone number they can use to call us at any time. B&B guests are so considerate. We seldom get calls from guests after 9:00PM." Another owner goes into more detail about how this simple system may work, "each guest room has a private phone which I believe promotes subliminal guest comfort; knowing that the innkeeper is on-site relaxing but is reachable at any time from the room phone."

Providing guests with constant communication options has the benefit of providing privacy for the owners, but they also recognize that the business they have chosen demands this level of connection. As one owner stated:

We pretty much make ourselves available 24/7 since we are not a large B&B. We have an intercom phone if guests need to reach us, or if we forward the phone and they call us, we can still be reached.

Owners seem to be articulating the complicated nature of communication technology faced by both traditional and non-traditional organizational members. For the bed and breakfast owners, the technology that is expected in modern organizations serves to create private space and time for them while simultaneously tying them to the business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Identify their needs

This sub-theme represents data from bed and breakfast owners who suggest that they are able to create a sense of privacy by making a concerted effort to understand the needs of their guests and empower them to satisfy those needs. This sub-theme is perhaps best articulated by one owner that wrote, "Engage with guests early on in their stay. This helps to identify their needs and makes guests feel you are available. They in turn aren't as needy for your time." As

another owner put it, “I try to make sure whatever the guests may need they can easily find and access on their own.”

While taking time and energy to communicate with guests and learn their needs would seem to detract from privacy, this is not necessarily the case. These owners argued that this communicative energy could be energy well-spent, as was the case for this respondent:

Clearly yet graciously communicating to guests (in various forms) helps to provide built-in personal time so that, for instance, we can eat lunch or dinner—not gulp. We might be able to squeeze in a 30 minute power nap before check in time, or run an errand or two.

The second theme, perception of availability, illustrates how bed and breakfast owners communicatively manage the perceptions of their guests so that they feel connected and empowered to negotiate their stay on their own, thereby creating more private time and space for the owners. The two sub-themes represent communication directly with the guests that serve (at times) to create privacy. The final theme discussed next exemplifies instances of intrapersonal communication that the owners engaged in to justify their lack of privacy during the busy seasons.

Banking Time and Space

The final theme emerging from the data in response to the research question was the least frequently articulated, but shows how some owners rationalize their lack of privacy during the certain times of the year. Banking time and space is the idea that some of the bed and breakfast owners participating in this study have seasonal downtimes or their business fluctuates with the economy, so they meet their privacy needs during those points in the year. This intrapersonal accounting allows them to manage the lack of privacy during the busy seasons. As one respondent said, “assume none [privacy] during the tourist season and make up for it in the nontourist season.”

While some bed and breakfast businesses are affected by the economy at any particular point in time, some operations are more predictable, allowing the owners to mentally prepare for the lack of privacy during those times. One owner alluded to this: “I usually don’t have guests from January-April, so I have a break. Pheasant hunting is from mid-October to the end of the year, that is a busy time, but seasonal.” Having some ability to predict busy times allows the bed and breakfast owners to fulfill their needs for private time and space during the off-season. While they clearly have these needs during the busy seasons, they reported justifying the lack of privacy during these times with the abundance during the off-seasons.

Three themes emerged from the data in response to the research question: traditional organizational structures, perception of availability, and banking time and space. The themes as described here represent different communicative approaches to managing privacy while operating a bed and breakfast out of a personal home. Respectively, these themes represent structural, interpersonal, and intrapersonal communicative activities that serve to create private

time and space for the bed and breakfast owners. In the next section, we attempt to make sense of the results in light of relevant literature.

Discussion

Although any individual who works from home faces challenges managing work and family time and space, bed and breakfast owners are unique in that their work is truly never finished. Their clients are in the home around the clock leaving owners with no choice but to attempt to find privacy in terms of time and space in their own home. As previously discussed, these strategies revolved around traditional organizational structures, the perception of availability and attempts to bank time and space.

Bed and breakfast owners utilize traditional organizational rules and resources as a first attempt to negotiate time and space for themselves. They rely on their clients being knowledgeable agents who are familiar with and abide by traditional organizational policies such as never opening a closed door and signage that clearly delineates public versus private space, similar to what you would see in any retail store, banking facility, or dining establishment. Although this strategy does not necessarily involve oral communication, it is a seemingly effective use of nonverbal messages to promote adherence to norms that govern traditional organizations. Giddens (1979) would describe this reliance on traditional organizational strategies as using rules and resources to create a macro-level structure that in turn helps bed and breakfast owners manage the micro-level interactions with clients staying in their home.

Another commonly utilized strategy was an attempt to communicatively manage clients' perceptions of the bed and breakfast owners' availability. Whereas the previous tactics revolved around organizational-level structures, this strategy was interpersonally centered. The idea was that if clients had a direct way to contact owners with any problems or concerns they would be less likely to go looking for the owners and unintentionally cross into a private area of the house. This strategy appeared to be more geared toward maintaining space than actual time as it did intentionally or unintentionally mean that owners were on call most if not all of the time. As a part of their discursive consciousness (Giddens, 1979) owners were able to articulate that this strategy was a way of trying to meet client needs while not having to be physically present all of the time. Actions, however, create structures, and will either enable or constrain future interactions. It is conceivable that if clients have immediate and direct access to owners for the majority of their stay, they may also expect their problems or concerns to be immediately addressed as well. This is clearly an example of Giddens' unintended consequences (1979). Unfortunately, the by-product of owners trying to find time and space for themselves and their families might actually mean they are more available to their clients in such a way that they reduce any possibility of achieving the privacy that they seek.

At the intrapersonal level, bed and breakfast owners utilize a strategy of mentally banking time and space to justify the public nature of their homes and their lack of personal or family time and private space. The idea is to suppress lack of time and space now in hopes that at a

point in the future, time and space will exist. This mental strategy may cause more stress, however, and increase the negative consequences of trying to manage public and private time and spaces because seasonality is a major concern for family-owned and operated bed and breakfast operations, particularly when the business is the family's sole source of income. During peak season, the daily operations can easily consume and overwhelm family roles and responsibilities. Family businesses "tend to minimize labor costs by maximizing their own inputs," which results in long hours with little or no time off for days, weeks, or even months depending on geographic and climate factors (Getz & Nilsson, 2004, p. 20). Families have little time for leisure or social activities and often feel the strain of loss of time with children, family and friends, religious participation, and other activities or hobbies. During these peak seasons, when the bed and breakfast is at capacity, family members may even be forced to give up their own accommodations in an attempt to maximize profits in an attempt to prepare for the inevitable off-season. Off-season for some bed and breakfast owners means fewer clients, but for other owners it means closing the business for the season. Although the costs associated with maintaining the house or houses remain consistent, mortgage payments remain, and other living expenses continue; the family has to rely upon the income that they saved during peak season. Failure to properly budget for unplanned expenses can place the bed and breakfast owners in a particularly vulnerable position.

Mental banking of time and space may have even greater mental and physical consequences for the already economically disadvantaged. In many developing areas of the world, bed and breakfasts are often a way to attain goals or rewards associated with improving social life (e.g., Pearce, 1990; Frater, 1982). Smith (1998) specifically analyzed small, third-world tourism enterprises and found significant and powerful incentives for their establishment. These incentives included influence over local economy and development, status attainment, access to professional and social networks, equity for future retirement, ability to hire friends and family members who might otherwise be unemployed, and the opportunity to be one's own boss. Continually thinking about a time when the bed and breakfast does not have customers may serve as a momentary reprieve from lack of time and space, but constantly foregrounding thoughts of the business's seasonality may increase already heightened concerns about economic sustainability and the individual or family's economic future.

When taken together, the three strategies of (1) employing traditional organizational structures, (2) communicating the perception of availability, and (3) banking time and space, represent resources that the bed and breakfast owners employ to maintain boundaries between what is public and what is private (Petronio, 1991). Those boundaries are then more or less permeable depending on the extent to which the owners and guests recognize and enforce them.

Communication boundary management theory (Petronio, 1991), when employed in conjunction with structuration theory, sheds light on the efforts to construct and maintain the boundaries. Petronio (2000) argued that the public-private dialectic requires interactants to expend energy to co-construct what is available to be shared (public) and what is not to be disclosed (private). She posited three "balance frameworks" (2000, p. xiii) that could be used to

understand the efforts to distinguish between public and private: (1) polarization, where energy is expended attempting to maintain either privacy or disclosure, while concerns for the other are negated, (2) equilibrium, which is an attempt to balance what is kept secret and what is disclosed, and (3) weighted proportions, where more weight is given to one of the options over the others, but energy is still expended to maintain the other possibilities, though not to the same extent.

In the context of the bed and breakfast, owners need to construct boundaries that protect family time and space, while concurrently affording guests the opportunity to feel that they are welcome and “like family” themselves. When the owners used traditional organizational structures they were approaching their boundary construction from the equilibrium framework. While on the surface these explicit boundary structures may appear to be more in line with the polarization framework, but they were regularly coupled with other strategies that showed they were interested in attempting to maintain a balance between public and private. The strategy of giving the perception of availability was an interpersonal level strategy based in the equilibrium framework. As noted earlier, however, an unintended consequence of employing that strategy is that some guests took advantage of the availability and the boundaries between public-private became more permeable than desired by the owners. While traditional organizational structures are fairly explicit boundary markers, giving the perception of availability is a strategy that is more implicit and relies on the guests to more actively co-construct the boundary. Opening a door marked “private” is a clear violation of the boundary, but using a telephone number provided by the owner to contact him or her at any time cannot be considered an explicit violation of the boundary. The desire of the owners is that the guests will self-regulate, allowing the perception of availability to demarcate an otherwise tenuous boundary.

Finally, the weighted proportions framework explains the strategy of banking time and space. As peak and off-seasons come and go owners recognize they have to expend more or less energy in protecting private time and space. Banking time and space during slow periods, in essence solidifying the boundaries between public and private, allows them to be more accepting of the boundary violations that will inevitably occur during the peak-seasons. While this is not an optimal strategy, it does allow the owners to have some sense of ownership and control over their space and time at some points during the year.

Limitations and Future Research

To obtain respondent geographic diversity, electronic qualitative questionnaires were employed. One limitation of the current study is that the questionnaires do not allow for follow-up questions to further probe participants’ reflections. Respondents provided intriguing answers to the open-ended questions, but it was often clear face-to-face interviews would have allowed for even richer data.

Another limitation is the inability of the researchers to visit these bed and breakfasts and see the strategies in use. Observational data would have added a level of richness and

understanding of owners' negotiations of public and private. We suspect that the owners who reported little with regard to how they communicatively manage privacy actually engage in multiple activities daily, but do so at a level of consciousness that did not allow them to be articulated in a questionnaire.

Future research in this area has several fascinating possibilities. First, research should explore the perspectives of children or significant others not involved in the operation of the bed and breakfast, so their voices could be included in the data. While the owners may not be able to fully comprehend or articulate how they communicatively manage private time and space, these other interested parties may.

Second, it would be valuable to obtain the guest perspective on how the owner(s) of the bed and breakfasts manage issues of privacy in the establishment. It was clear from the data we gathered that some owners work very hard to manage this tension, and the clients would be able to articulate the unintended consequences of these activities in a way that the owners never could.

Finally, research should explore how bed and breakfast owners communicatively manage work and family as they are raising a family and/or maintaining a relationship with a significant other in the presence of paying guests in their home. Research on this aspect would be a valuable contribution to our understanding of the communicative energy that is expended as owners of home-based business continue balancing work and family.

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