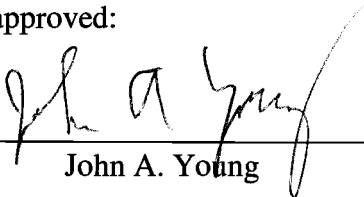


AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Adam A. Gardels for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Anthropology
presented
on July 11th, 2005.

Title: Being and Consuming: The Dynamics of Self and Society in the Marketing
of Alumni Association Brands.

Abstract approved:



John A. Young

This thesis employs cultural analysis to better understand the meanings consumers have for the brands they consume. This research uses qualitative methods to elicit and analyze the brand meanings alumni and students have of their alma mater and alumni associations. Results from this research suggest that consumption is a ritual act whereby consumers develop symbolic interpretations for brands to resolve issues related to the ongoing construction of their worlds' and selves. Alumni and students infuse the interpretation of their alma mater and alumni association brand with meanings helping them to reconcile their university experience with their vocational, familial, social, and ideographic perspectives about the worlds they live in.

The first part deals with the paradigmatic differences between marketing and anthropological theory as it relates to the meanings consumers have for the act of consumption. This approach replaces the marketing concepts of brand loyalty, brand communities, and the extended self with parallel concepts in

anthropology of cultural projection, heterotopic consumption communities, and the centrifugal self.

The second part adds to the existing research on alumni, which tends to be concerned with their potential as university donors. Consistent with other studies, this thesis suggests the relationships alumni have with their alma mater are shaped by their student experiences and continually reshaped by their current life contexts.

The third part offers a unique qualitative method for discovering the personal concepts and themes shaping informants' life experiences and brand perceptions. This method involves photo elicitation techniques used with informants to help them better depict their perceptions of their worlds and their place in them.

The fourth part offers structural analytical techniques for narrative data. These techniques reveal the emic structure of the data which serves as contextual information for in-depth analysis. The structural perspective in this research offers new ideas about segmentation analysis consistent with the consumer experience.

The conclusions of this research demonstrate how adaptations of marketing theory by Oregon State University Alumni Association administrators have resulted in mismanagement of their brand. Applied insights from this research illustrate the way in which anthropological theory is adept at yielding emic consumer insights for the purpose of better managing alumni association brands.

The applied suggestions of this research explain that companies and alumni associations ought not be concerned with finding the most loyal consumer or ideal alum. Instead, administrators should be concerned with the question of “how do alumni conceive of a more perfect alumni association?” This challenge is best resolved by understanding the differences in the student experience and post-graduate lifestyle. These experiences are not temporally distant, but mutually constructive in the present. Therefore, alumni association brands will be more sanguine in the lives of alumni if associations are constituent of the student experience, contribute to familial and vocational contexts of students and alumni’s lives, and inclusive of multiple perspectives about the ideal university experience.

© Copyright by Adam A. Gardels
July 11, 2005
All Rights Reserved

Being and Consuming: The Dynamics of Self and Society in the Marketing of
Alumni Association Brands

by
Adam A. Gardels

A THESIS

submitted to

Oregon State University

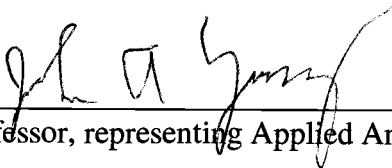
In partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

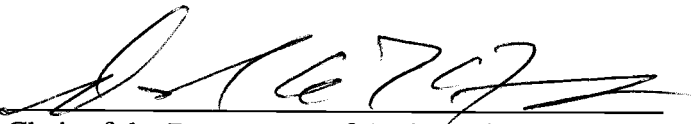
Master of Arts

Presented July 11, 2005
Commencement June 2006

Master of Arts thesis of Adam A. Gardels presented on July 11, 2005.

APPROVED:


Major Professor, representing Applied Anthropology


Chair of the Department of Anthropology


Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.


Adam A. Gardels, Author

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many special reason why this thesis has come to be. The first is the unique spirit of pragmatism that is the strength of the Applied Anthropology Department at OSU. For this I owe my gratitude to John Young, Nancy Rosenberger, and James McAlexander.

Also I am fortunate to have two parents who support my education and academic interests. Thank you Mom and Dad, for those things I can not repay you enough for.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Prologue.....	1
Chapter One—Introduction.....	5
Chapter Two—Literature Review.....	7
Overview.....	7
Epistemology.....	7
Psychology and Marketing Perspective.....	9
Cultural Perspective.....	10
Epilog.....	18
Chapter 3—Applied Literature Review.....	23
Overview.....	23
Background.....	23
Historical Overview.....	23
Function of the OSU Association.....	24
Marketing Strategy.....	25
Brand Strategy.....	26
Alumni Research.....	26
Alumni Fundraising: Attitudes, Perceptions, Experiences, and Institutional Control.....	27
Student Experiences, Alumni Values and View of Self.....	31
Managing the Association Brand Image.....	32
Brand Extension.....	33
Chapter Four—Methods.....	37
Methodological Needs.....	37
Technique.....	38
Initiation Phase.....	40
Thematic Elicitation Phase.....	41
Structural Analysis Phase.....	41
Association Phase.....	42
Informant Selection.....	43
Methodological Reality.....	44
Material Results.....	45
Chapter Five—Analysis.....	46
General Structural Oppositions.....	46
Analytic Techniques.....	47
Overview of Analytical Findings.....	51
Segmentation of Informants.....	53
Data Analysis.....	56
Vocation.....	56
Summary of Analysis.....	80
Brand Image.....	84
Chapter Six—Conclusion.....	86
Chapter Seven—Limitations and Future Research.....	95
Limitations.....	95

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Scope of Inference.....	95
Validity and Research Procedures.....	95
Suggestions for Future Research.....	95
Broader Observations.....	95
Ethnographic Documentation.....	96
Chapter Eight—Recommendations.....	97
Bibliography.....	94
Appendices.....	108
Appendix A: Photo Documentation Assignments.....	109
Appendix B: Table of Informants.....	111
Appendix C: Structural Analysis Matrix.....	112

LIST OF FIGURES

	<u>Page</u>
1. Symbolic Attitudinal Grid.....	54

LIST OF TABLES

	<u>Page</u>
1. Definition of Structural Domains.....	53

LIST OF DIAGRAMS

	<u>Page</u>
1. Hall's Circuit of Culture.....	16
2. Beaverness Model.....	21
3. Brand Positioning Diagram.....	33
4. Association Brand Identity Positioning Model.....	33
5. Representation of Informant's Perception of the Association Brand.....	67
6. Association's Brand Image.....	85

Being and Consuming: The Dynamics of Self and Society in the Marketing of
Alumni Association Brand Relationships

PROLOGUE

The purpose of this thesis is to meet the demands of an applied work and fulfill the requirements of a thesis. By convention, applied works produce something that 'works' in the world of practice. Theses, however, are judged to be adequate by satisfying academic standards of epistemological enlightenment—producing results through rigorous means which demonstrate how claims are related to the body of knowledge.

Concerning the practice of marketing there is no need to 'discover' anthropology, sociology, and psychology. Marketing has both discovered, adapted methods from, and been ignored by anthropology¹. Clearly the preponderance of anthropological research published in marketing and consumer journals far outweighs applied research on marketing and consumer behavior in anthropological journals.

¹ In analyzing the relationship between anthropology and marketing Sherry states that "lack of familiarity has bred a mutual indifference, if not contempt, among the researchers of these parallel disciplines" (1989: 555). However, in a conversation with a colleague who has a bachelor's degree in advertising and a master's in anthropology he stated that "Business is more accepting of anthropology than anthropology is of business." I believe he was being generous, as I stand on the statement that business is more accepting of anthropology than anthropology is tolerant of business. Personally, I have been complimented by fellow marketing students who take an immediate interest in the use of anthropology in business. Conversely, I have been met with antagonism and outright reprisals by fellow anthropology students who learn I am interested in applying anthropology to business. In fact, in introducing myself as a business anthropology student to my anthropology department office mate she festooned me with unabated cynicism decrying that "I think businesses are *ikee*! I don't see how anyone could apply anthropology to business." For my sake I am glad business has not adopted her narrow thinking.

For its part, marketing has appropriated ethnographic and other qualitative methods from anthropology and improved upon them greatly. What have been mistakenly left behind are associated theories structuring the interpretation of data flowing from these methods. For this reason astute marketing researchers have begun to question the relationship between marketing and anthropology demanding a theoretical anthropological construction of the field of marketing. In proposing needed “amendments to marketing theory” Grafton-Small (1987: 66) implicitly criticizes the practice of borrowing anthropological and sociological methods without theoretical understandings as ‘lip service’ and demands a revitalization of the practice of marketing in light of anthropological theory stating that “Lip service may be paid to disciplines such as anthropology or sociology yet no real effort is ever made to discuss either marketing managers or the society they seek to serve in....” (66). Undoubtedly this suggests that the practice of marketing is highly conceptual, yet marketing concepts are extensions of marketing theory which may be poor devices for understanding social life.

In its quest to understand culture, meaning, and the consumers’ life-ways, marketing discovered anthropology; and in its effort to become more applicable anthropology must help develop a theory of culture in the practice of marketing. Therefore, since applied research is that which assists in the practice of a discipline, applied anthropological research must both describe consumer meanings in context and educate the discipline on how to approach an understanding of meanings. Similarly, Sherry argues for a ‘metathoretical’

construction between the fields of anthropology and marketing in order to achieve the interests of applied research stating:

Marketing scholars and consumer researchers have been apprised of the peril of ignoring the metatheoretical implications of relying excessively on a simple paradigm in their research. The models and metaphors by which we apprehend marketplace phenomena, and the methods by which we generate and test these constructs are less elegant for this dependency.... One of the critical issues to be resolved if marketers, consumer researchers and anthropologists are to work effectively together is that of strategic vision (Sherry 1989: 555).

Given Sherry's consideration of the relationship between anthropology and marketing, I believe it is incumbent to ask the question "How can anthropology be practiced in the practice of marketing?" before we can practice anthropology in the practice of marketing. I was fundamentally naïve about the above question when I began the research for this thesis. I learned that with any discipline, in this case marketing, understandings of the results of research are shaped by theories and paradigms. Therefore, in delivering practical or emic insights from my research to alumni marketers I found these insights were internalized by them and made to conform to their theoretical explanations about consumption. Though it is convenient for some applied researchers to view theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge as separate, the fact remains that the production and use of knowledge is embedded in cultures of paradigmatic understanding. Therefore, the effectiveness of applied research necessitates that the researcher first address the theoretical apparatus responsible for interpreting the practical knowledge discovered by applied research. For this reason the literature review for this thesis is a little lengthy and I ask then that this thesis as

an applied work be measured against the needs and conventions of the discipline
it is meant to be applied in.

CHAPTER ONE—INTRODUCTION

The strength of modern marketing is its ability to relate to consumers as people in worlds of meaning, rather than as customers' in marketplaces. As such, the infrastructure of marketing—brands, advertising, products, and relationships, must be meaningful in consumers' worlds. Therefore, significant advances in marketing follow from investigation into the world contexts linking consumers and products in meaningful ways. This thesis is both a study of consumers worlds and the product meanings therein; and a model for integrating these findings for marketing strategy.

The work in this thesis was conducted as an exploratory investigation of the brand perceptions alumni have of the Oregon State University Alumni Association. The product of this research is designed to help create a marketing strategy that will increase the number of dues-paying young alumni members. However, simply determining what alumni perceptions of the Alumni Association can only describe a fraction of the picture marketers need. Through this research I describe a more complete understanding of alumni brand perceptions as a product of alumni's university experiences, current life context, and view of self. This approach provides a holistic context making better sense of the reasons why certain brand perceptions emerge. Ultimately, this description yields a more effective means for developing future Alumni Association marketing strategies.

I employ qualitative methods and analysis in the production of this thesis. These techniques are fairly novel, as the initial engagement with informants

begins with a photographic autobiographical phase concerning their life contexts, sense of self, values, and experiences. This phase is followed by a semi-structured interview process where themes are elicited from the photographs and proximal associations with specific brand identities. The results of this analysis yield brand strategies treating brands as mediated meanings constructed by consumers and marketers.

CHAPTER TWO—LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This thesis employs a cultural analysis of the meaning and experience of the act of consumption. This approach to the theory of consumption contradicts various concepts of 'the consumer' as individual and supplants this perspective with an idea of consumers as participants actively engaged in the construction of self and society. I argue that the self of the consumer is pivotal in the construction of consumption meanings and that these meanings have symbolic value only in as much as they help link consumer to others and to society. Insights from this research are important in describing the brand interpretations alumni have for their alumni associations. Results from this research demonstrate that alum/university and alum/alumni association relationships evolve with alumni's changing life contexts. These insights suggest that it is incumbent upon alumni association marketers to develop brand strategies accommodating the many varied beliefs and projections alumni have of their alma mater and their daily lives.

Epistemology

The study of the topic of consumption is informed by many perspectives and disciplines. For my part I will illustrate how consumption is a ritual shaped by broader cultural contexts (Sherry 1995). Whereas the discipline of marketing tends to describe consumptive meanings shaped by psychological factors (Foxall 1994), this cultural approach illustrates how the ritual of consumption is situated in daily life (Miller 2001). These approaches can only complement each other by offering multiple perspectives on the meaning of consumption. The difference between a marketing perspective of consumption and an anthropological one are subtle, but important. Marketing perspectives often describe why consumption is important, and cultural perspectives describe how the meanings of consumption rituals come to be.

Marketing and consumer behavior studies have benefited much from psychological perspectives on consumption (see Foxall 1994, Ziemer 2004, and Bayton 1958). These studies tend to describe 'needs satisfaction' as the reason why consumption acts are meaningful (Appelbaum 1998). This approach is practical because it presupposes that needs exist, and satiation of these needs motivates consumers' behavior. Therefore, consumer research can discover what a particular consumptive act means and thereby learn how it is related to underlying needs (Abbie and Hauser 1993).

A cultural approach to the description of consumption differs in that consumption rituals are linked to the world in which people live, rather than the internal needs driving consumers' behaviors. By this convention consumer behaviors are rationalized by understanding how the ritual of consumption is important in maintaining consumers' worlds (Folkman et. al 2004).

The treatment of why consumption has meaning has typically concerned ego-centered consumer needs (see Newman and Dolich 1979). Therefore, the study of the symbolic meanings of consumption has almost exclusively been confined to egoistic satisfactions. In this way the academic domains of semiotics and ontology have been conjoined to form a penumbra loosely defining the boundary of the consumptive act. In sum, conventional perspectives on consumption explain that consumptive acts are meaningful because people have a need to 'be' someone particular, and have a need to express who they are (Appadurai 1996:55-6).²

² The depiction of the discipline of marketing thus far given can only be regarded as a crude generalization of psychology's influences on the discipline. I regard marketing as the applied discipline of the social

As a means of elaborating upon marketing's perspectives on consumption I will demonstrate how the ontological and semiotic aspects of consumption come to be. These results will serve the etiological interests of explaining how consumer needs are culturally manifest.

As a way of illustrating the value of this approach I will summarize the cosmologies of the two foregoing paradigms concerning consumption: The psychological/marketing perspective and the cultural perspective. These streams of thought demonstrate the nuanced ways that ontology and semiotics are constructed in the study of consumption.

Psychology/Marketing Perspective

One of the most pervasive cosmological descriptions of consumption offered by marketing and consumer behavior research is object bonding (Belk 1988, Tan Su Wee and Ming 2003). This perspective describes a world where there are things and consumers. This cosmology explains that people are born into the world no different from things. Yet it is through the acquisition of, and control over possessions that people develop selves (Belk 1988). The self emerges through possessions because people perceive the universe along the two fundamental dimensions of 'me' versus 'not me,' and 'mine' versus 'not mine' (Belk 1988, 1989, Tan Su Wee and Ming 2003).

The most prominent proponent of object bonding is Belk (1988) who adapted the concept of object bonding as a means of formalizing consumers' 'self perceptions' as the complete concept of the self. He refers to this perceptual self

sciences because it has very much focused on applications of knowledge and has done much to allow for contributions from multiple disciplines. However, any fair representation of the theories foundational to marketing will demonstrate psychology's strong contributions to the discipline.

as the *extended self*, which emerges through one's psychic investment (144) in possessions helping one to fulfill the needs of "having, doing, and being" (145-47). Belk resolves the ontic and semiotic boundaries of consumption by suggesting that consumers' 'need to be' is synonymous with the meanings for their consumptive acts, stating:

A key to understanding what possessions mean is recognizing that, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves....That we are what we have is perhaps the most basic and powerful fact of consumer behavior (Belk 1988: 139).

Cultural Perspective

Similar to object bonding, the cultural approach to consumption forwards phenomenal explanations on consumptive meanings; however, the cultural cosmology is different. This cosmology suggests that while there are things, selves, and others (George H. Mead 1934, Prus 1996, Shultz 1932) there is a pre-existing system of patterns (Sausser 1986, 1996, Douglass and Isherwood 1996, originally 1979,) or underlying structures (Levi-Strauss 1963, 1966, 1973, 1975) shaping the way people perceive their world (D' Andrade 1995). These structures, as well as those higher order norms, expectations, and conventions (Turner 1957, 1967, Garfinkel 1967) form the complex of phenomena understood as culture (Geertz 1973, Bourdieu 1990). It is also understood that culture is the practical knowledge used to interact with one's world (Spradley and McCurdy 1973), and social authority (Foucault 1986, Kuhn 1970, originally 1962, and Hodder 1991) shaping the way society is conceived and symbolically maintained (Turner 1957, 1967, Garfinkel 1967, and Giddens 1991).

In practical terms, culture may be understood as the social framework regulating and providing for the maintenance of one's identity (Goffman 1959, 1963, and Rosenberger 1988), the pattern of relationships between groups of people (Putnam 1995, Fukuyama 1995, Bankston III and Zhou 2002, Castle 2002, Woolcock 1997, Bourdieu 1984), the system of symbolic reference (Sausser 1996, Manning 2001, Kissling 1996) and ethos, which makes possible collective experiences (Margaret Mead 1980, Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, Kozinets 2001, Sherry and Kozinets 2004, St. Joseph 2001). There is no doubt that culture structures consumption (Holt 1995), however, what remains to be demonstrated is how ontic and semiotic aspects of culture shape consumption.

In order to resolve this objective the self must be conceived of in social terms. Douglas and Calvez (1990) offer such a description, stating:

In a long tradition of economics the self is conceived as always [choosing] according to ... self interest[s]....[However] the self... [acts] according to a predictable pattern of dealings between the person and others in the community. [Our] thesis is that the cultural project to make the city makes the selves at the same time. An endless dialogue about how to achieve the ideal community engages ... kinds of culture, in each of which the self is required to play a different role (445-6).

This cultural dialogue of the self and community is elaborated through the ritual of consumption. Consumption, then, is a medium by which the self is formalized in relation to community and this relationship provides the framework to make semiotic judgments about consumptive acts.

Rosenberger (1996, 2001) observed similar cultural constructions of self and meaning during her study of Japanese women's lifestyles. Of particular note

is her observation that cultural categories, gender in this case, provide cooperative bonds superseding the relationship between self and society. She refers to this aspect of self, which is sensitive to the social standing of the group, as the *centrifugal self*. Rosenberger demonstrated how Japanese women's changing views concerning the meanings of consumption (travel, hobbies, and consumerism) "were integral to this centrifugal movement, as women friends drew each other out into new arenas" (2001:157). This centrifugal movement approximates the cultural dialogue explained by Douglas and Calvez (1990) and explains how ontic, semiotic, and consumption rituals are shaped by kinetic cultural momentum. Rosenberger states that:

The personhood of movement and multiplicity shown here accommodates a variety of situations, relationships, and modes of being, from discipline and hierarchy to intimacy and autonomy. It is a type of self that emerges in societies where the experience of various kinds of relationships and various permutations of spiritual force is more significant than the relationship of the individual to society (2001: 43).

Rosenberger's sociology (2001) demonstrates three important aspects concerning the construction of meaning in consumption: agency, plurality and multiplicity³, and social significance. First, Rosenberger's work describes consumers as intentioned actors able to locate the meaning for consumption in broader social contexts. Secondly, she demonstrates that consumers appropriate new meanings for their consumption by adroitly indexing, or pointing to, conflicted and ambiguous social contexts. Third, Rosenberger discovered that consumers signify consumptive meanings by relating their consumptive acts to broader social situations as a means of relating themselves and others to society.

³ Concepts of plurality and multiplicity suggest that because of subjective experiences differing interpretations for things are possible.

In sum, Rosenberger's perspective suggests that consumption is meaningful because it is a ritual dialogue for negotiating new social realities counter posed with more conventional social norms.

Douglas and Isherwood's (1996, originally 1979) study of consumption further elaborates Rosenberger's cultural perspective by demonstrating how consumables are part of the world of culture, and therefore; substantial signs in the world influencing the way people perceive meanings and objects subject to the activity of producing meaning. Their perspective suggests that both goods and the selves of consumers are involved in a process of mutual perpetuation where the symbolic realities of both are dependent upon each other. They employ 'information theory' to suggest that people are sense making beings who gain interpretations about things in their world from a system of information. Douglas and Isherwood state that goods are markers of meaning comprising both the apparatus for creating meaning, and symbols for transmitting meaning. Furthermore, consumption meanings are continually shaped by changes to the information system (Douglas and Isherwood 1996, originally 1979):

human rationality.... negotiates the organizing structures [the information system]. Human experience can flow into a vast variety of possible frameworks, for the rational human is responsible for continually recreating a universe in which choice can take place. Making sense of the world involves interpreting the world as sensible. But consumption goods are most definitely not mere messages; they constitute the very system itself. Take them out of human intercourse and you have dismantled the whole thing. In being offered, accepted, or refused, [goods] either reinforce or undermine existing boundaries. The goods are both the hardware and the software, so to speak, of an information system (48-49)....

If we view goods and their names as the accessible parts of an information system, the consumer's problem in achieving his life-project

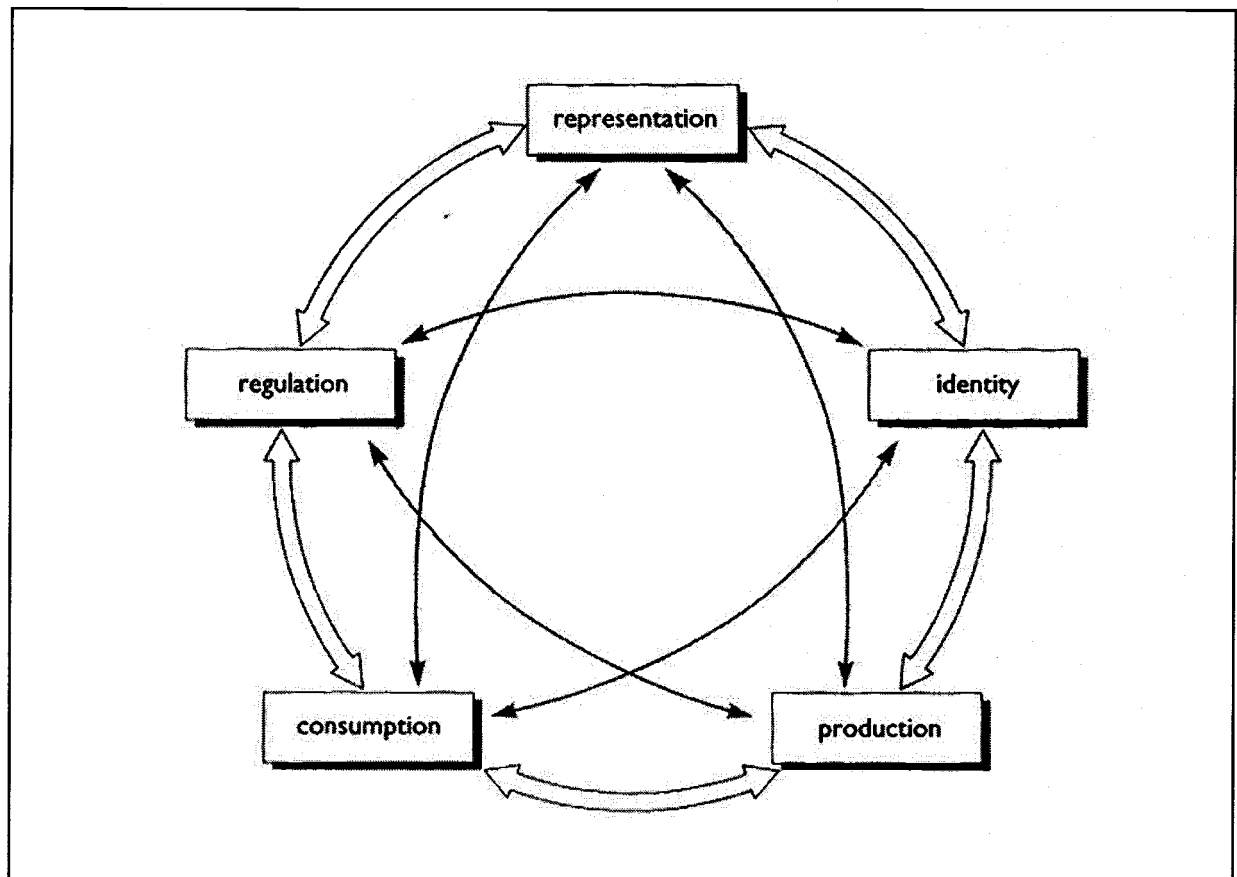
becomes clearer. He needs goods to give marking services; that is, he has to be present at other people's rituals of consumption to be able to circulate his own judgments of the fitness of the things used to celebrate the diverse occasions (56).

These descriptions of consumption as ritual describe a very pragmatic picture of the role of culture in the construction of meaning. Douglas and Isherwood (1996, originally 1979) describe consumption rituals unfolding in cultural systems partly comprised of consumer goods; Rosenberger (1996, 2001) demonstrates that consumers are aware of their status in these cultural systems and therefore negotiate strategic meanings for their consumption rituals; and Douglas and Calvez (1990) state that the significance of human activity is that it is a symbolic dialog concerning the construction of the self and society.

These and other cultural analyses have become integral to the study of the most powerful aspect of consumer goods and services: Brands. In their study of the *Sony Walkman* brand du Gay, Hall, Janes, Machay, and Negus (1997) approached the topic from a cultural perspective similarly to those outlined above. They observed that the management of the *Sony* brand is achieved through a broader cultural dialogue. This dialogue is both a production and consumption ritual where the *Sony Walkman* is treated like an artifact that both producer and consumer must actively position and animate within the context of society. du Gay et. al argue that the trajectory of the meaning for the *Sony Walkman* follows from these rituals where *Sony* regulates the public meaning of the *Walkman* and consumers' appropriate new meanings for the *Walkman* so that they may incorporate it into their life situations.

They represent this interpretation of consumption through graph-theoretic logic (see Hall's Circuit of Culture diagram 1 below) illustrating the process by which the *Walkman* is encoded for cultural significance. As a circuit the model describes meanings being produced without a specific point of origin on the model nor point of termination. For du Gay et. al (1997) *representations* are activities by *Sony* to articulate meanings for the *Walkman* through the advertising discourse. *Production* is the process bringing the *Walkman* to be both technically and culturally. The latter is achieved through advertisements designed to associate the *Walkman* with specific lifestyles or *identities*. Identities are sociographic associations about either corporations or consumers. Identities help formalize companies as cultural participants and relate consumers to products through symbolic means. *Regulations* are iterations to the production of meaning made by *Sony* to recapitulate the meanings consistent with new interpretations of the *Walkman*. And *consumption* are activities by the consumer to reconfigure the meanings of the *Walkman* for their personal use.

Diagram 1: Hall's Circuit of Culture



In conceiving of the *Sony Walkman* as a cultural artifact du Gay et. al both verify Douglas and Isherwood's (1996, originally 1979) systematic view of culture, and unknowingly challenge the psychological foundations of marketing, which is the satisfaction of psychological needs through consumerism. They do so by rendering a description of consumption independent of any notion of psychic investment in 'one's need to be,' and offering a scenario where meaning is shaped by 'cultural needs' following from social and cultural contexts, stating that:

Rather than being 'natural', needs are ... 'cultural'. That is to say, needs are both defined and produced by the systems of meaning through which we make sense of the world and thus are open to being re-worked and transformed. In consumption, as in language more generally, usage

changes or inflects the meaning of objects in particular ways and, over time, in different periods or contexts, and in relation to new situations, new meanings or inflections will emerge. In this sense, the meanings that material cultural artifacts come to have cannot be fixed, since there is no way of insisting that the uses made of them and the meanings that usage produces will not change over time or in different contexts. (91)

Concerning the making of meaning no words ring more true than Levi-Strauss's when he wrote that, "Meaning is not decreed: If it is not everywhere it is nowhere" (Levi-Strauss 1963: 91). A cultural description of meaning, then, does not so much concern a specific denotive interpretation of a thing, but an illustration of how emic interpretations of things are integrated into the ongoing dialogue concerning the construction and maintenance (Turner 1957, 1967, Garfinkel 1967) of self and society (Douglas and Calvez 1990). Bourdieu (1990) and Holt (1995) explain that this dialogue embodied in consumption is a 'cultural projection' concerning the ideal society for which consumers continually negotiate new 'heterotopias' (St. John 2001, and Sherry and Kozinets 2004). As Douglas and Calvez predict the construction of self is integral to this dialogue. The 'possible selves' (Douglas and Isherwood 1996) consumers construct through the ritual of consumption are 'good to think' (Levi-Strauss 1963: 89) about these cultural projections and heterotopias comprising the dialogue about society.

There exists no clearer example of consumption being a higher order dialogue about self and society than that presented by Schouten and McAlexander (1995) in their ethnography of motor-biker subculture. They illustrate that the

evolution of the motor-cycle owner into a 'biker' involves compliance with sub-cultural projections concerning the ideal order of biker society, stating that:

In a process similar to the reconstruction of identity... aspirants to the Harley-Davidson Sub-Culture experiment with the concept of "biker" as a possible self. Once the possible self is sufficiently elaborated and deemed to be both desirable and achievable, the aspirant is ready ... to make the acquisition that initiates him or her into the ranks of Harley ownership. However, as the Cycle Lords of the High Truth are quick to point out, the mere acquisition of a Harley-Davidson motorcycle doth not a biker make.

The individual's movement into and through the commitment-based status hierarchy of the Harley-Davidson Sub-Culture constitutes a gradual transformation of the self.... bikers undergo an evolution of motives and a deepening of commitment as they become more involved in the subculture (55).

For my part, I will discuss both how alumni and students view the brand of the OSU Alumni Association and how these interpretations are important to the structuring of their world and place in it (Prus 1986a, 1986 b).

Epilog

Following the commissioning of this research, Association marketers and administrators developed explicit brand management theories which integrate their interpretation of consumption based upon Belk's theory of the extended self (1988), and Schouten and McAlexander (1995), and Muniz and O'Guin's (2001) writings concerning sub-cultures of consumption and brand communities⁴. The Association's theory is meant to be used as a means of interpreting alumni's relationship with the Association brand.

⁴ The Association's interpretation of these consumer theories should not be used as a summary of these theories.

The model they devised to explain this theory is called the ‘Beaverness⁵ Model’ and describes how dimensions of brand community are inextricably materialized in the ontological construction of OSU alumni’s extended self. Association marketers use this model to explain what the ideal alumnus is like. The model explains this ideal concept by three relationships with intra-psychic ramifications: 1) Alumnus/OSU relationship—this relationship is demonstrated by deep personal loyalty to, and ideological identity formation with OSU. This relationship is said to be measured by the concept of ‘*I-ness*.’ Alum who measure high in I-ness are said to view him or herself as part of OSU and this relationship is integral to how the alum views oneself. 2) Alum/Alumni relationship—this relationship describes a given alum’s affective commitment to viewing themselves as a member of the OSU alumni body. This relationship is said to be measured by the concept of ‘*We-ness*.’ Alumni who measure high in We-ness are said to experience deeply personal affects associated with their belief in being part of the alumni community. 3) Self//Not Self—this is a semiotic process where an alum employs a sense of *who ca not be a Beaver* in order to define, in part, *what being a Beaver is*. The university athletics rivalry between OSU and the University of Oregon was divined as the source of those who ‘cannot be a Beaver.’ The concept of ‘*They-ness*’ was developed to measure this semiotic process. They-ness suggests that alumni will view themselves and the alumni community in particular terms because being a Beaver is made distinct in

⁵ The mascot for OSU is a beaver. Though the mascot has immediate university athletic associations, it may be said that all alumni and students of OSU are Beavers. There are particular aspects of the Beaverness model that suggest a definite association with the concept of being a Beaver with university athletics.

as much as there exists a concept for its opposite, being a Duck⁶. The Beaverness model is represented in the diagram below.

Understanding the model requires a working interpretation of Belk's theory of the extended self (1988). The model describes the health of the alumni community as dependent upon the degree to which alumni bond with OSU products. This is so for practical reasons. Creators of the Beaverness model state that in order for alumni to recognize other committed members of the alumni community they must be able to both perceive who belongs to the OSU Alumni Community and to what degree they are committed to the community. This occurs in the most positive of ways when an alum wears a very obvious item which at the same time implies that the owner is committed to OSU and against the University of Oregon.

The dynamics involved in the Beaverness model was succinctly explained in an article produced by the Association which it circulated to all alumni:

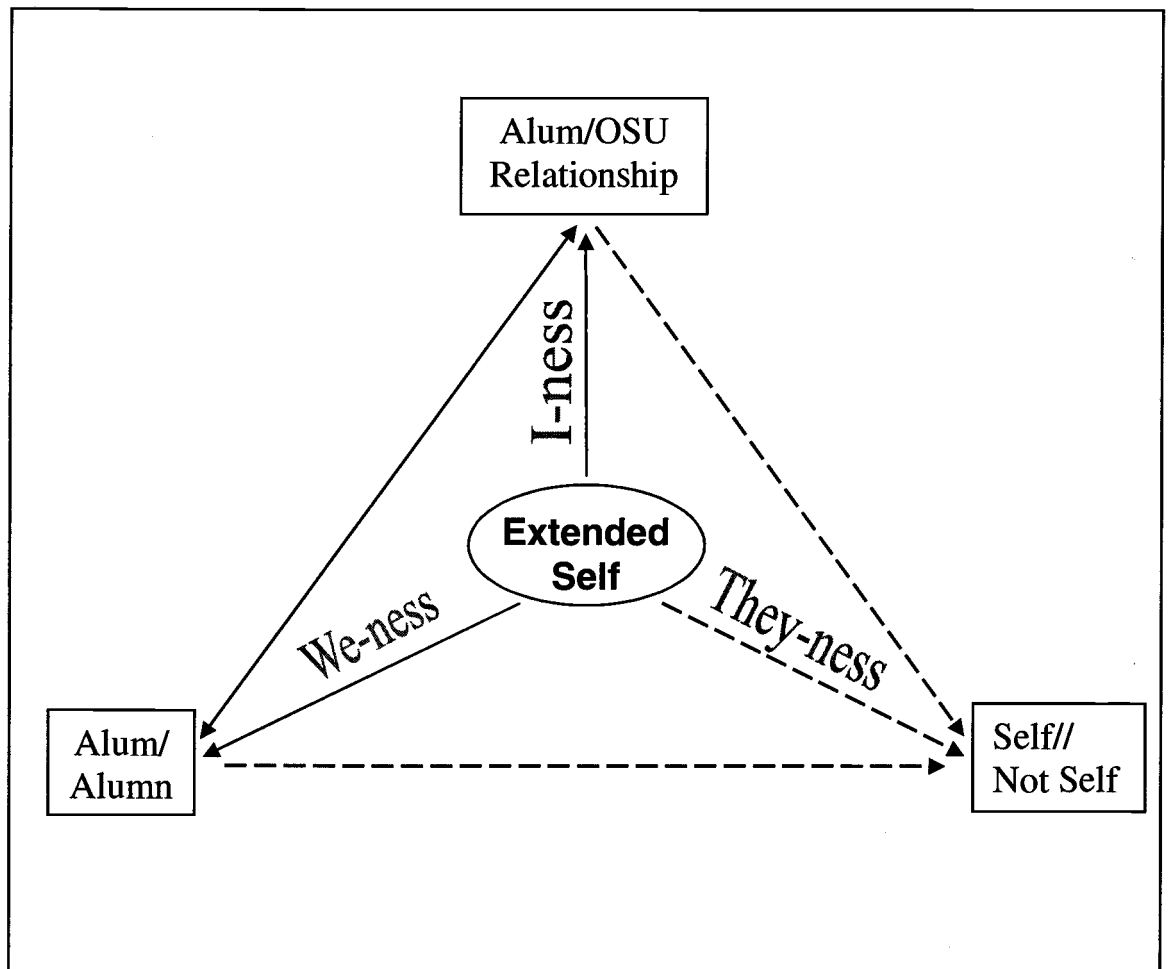
The elements of [OSU alumni] *community* center first on an *inward sense of "we,"* that is a personal understanding that you belong to a group....

The second dimension of community involves the way we *exhibit our community connectiveness to others*. Such exhibitions manifest themselves in two ways: (1) how we display our affiliation to other members within the group and, (2) how we exhibit these connections to members of the public who are not members. At OSU, such behavior might include the wearing of orange logo clothing or orange day-glow wigs or singing the Fight Song or Alma Mater. These actions all have a role in reinforcing the notion of community and represent some of the ways we exhibit our membership so that others might see who we are. Such symbols may also provide outlets for extreme exhibition. This is common at athletic events and other highly charged situations in which in-your-face behaviors such as wearing orange clothing "nose-to-toes" is perfect for the occasion.

⁶ The University of Oregon's university mascot is a duck.

A third element of community is that in striving for a *sense of “we,”* it is important to also have a *sense of “they.”* This sets up a boundary that reinforces the notion of community by differentiating members from outsiders. Even to a casual observer, it becomes instantly clear that even a lukewarm Beaver is not a Duck!⁷

Diagram 2: Beaverness Model



The value in explaining this model in this thesis is that it first, demonstrates how theory is used to understand consumers in the practice of marketing. Second, it demonstrates the thinking of the Association in relationship to their consumers. Third, the Beaverness model is the framework

⁷ Foley, Dwayne (2002), *Celebrating Our Colors*, The Oregon Stater, Vol. 87, No. 2, September.

with which much of the findings of this thesis are expected to conform in order to assist the Association in building a brand consistent with their consumers' lifestyles.

CHAPTER 3-APPLIED LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

I have separated the literature review for applied literature specifically dealing with alumni research because the theoretical orientation of this research is divergent from the academic literature above. Also because of the unique nature of the OSU Alumni Association, and its functions, much of the research concerning alumni is not directly applicable to this thesis. However, it is necessary to incorporate this literature to associate this thesis with the body of alumni research, and provide a grounded basis for the forgoing theoretical perspectives.

Background

This research is funded by the Oregon State University Alumni Association (here after referred to as the Association). I agreed to this research for the Association to satisfy their interests in understanding the brand perceptions recent graduates have of the Association. They intend to use this knowledge to better marketing strategies to affect younger alumni's motives for purchasing annual alumni memberships.

Historical Overview

In the past the Association was partly responsible for the maintenance of university traditions and customs. According to a recent history article, in 1936 the Association performed an inventory of university traditions, customs,

activities, and organizations. The inventory generated more than 400 entries⁸. Furthermore, the Association performed several ceremonies associated with students rites at OSU.

Function of the OSU Association

The Association is not a fundraising organization. It offers entertainment programs, services and information about the university to alumni in order to sustain their relationships with the university and other alumni.

The objectives of the Association are embodied in its Vision and Mission Statement⁹:

Vision Statement

The Oregon State University Alumni Association will *enrich the lives of OSU alumni*¹⁰ and friends, *engage them in the life of the university*, and promote Oregon State University and its programs, people, and goals.

Mission Statement

The mission of the OSU Alumni Association is to develop and *nurture life long relationships* of the university's alumni and friends—with each other and with the university—*by creating experiences that strengthen the elements of community, pride, and love of knowledge*.

The Association achieves the goals of enriching, alumni's lives and strengthening alumni/university relationships through the following alumni activities and functions:

- Publishing a magazine covering current and historical topics about the university and its alumni.

⁸ George Edmonston Jr., (online) *OSU Alumni Association Carry Me Back: Chapter 21 of 30: The Golden Age of Traditions (1890-1920)*. <http://alumni.oregonstate.edu/eclips/carry/nov9_2001.html>

⁹ Oregon State University Alumni Association Business Plan (2001).

¹⁰ Italics are authors emphasis.

- Hosting alumni events where alumni can visit with other alumni and meet university faculty and administrators. These events often include:
 - Picnics
 - Reunions
 - Educational presentations by faculty to the alumni
 - Regional Social networks
 - International Travel Opportunities
 - ‘Tailgating’—food and festivities at university athletic events
 - Alumni Award Ceremonies
- Organizing alumni volunteer opportunities where alumni contact prospective students and talk with them about the university.

Currently, the Association is trying to revive its participation in student campus life. The Association continues to host the annual Homecoming Bonfire, which is a celebration of the beginning of the school year. At this ceremony students convene at fire built by the Association and sing the school’s ‘fight song’ and cheer for a few select guest members of the football team.

A new student ‘tradition’ the Association is hosting is called the Send-off Celebration. This annual event is only for graduating students. Attendees are offered food and play poker games for a chance to win prizes.

Marketing Strategy

The Association is partially funded through revenues from alumni membership dues. Their marketing strategies must address the wants and concerns of some 90,000 living alumni residing across the globe, but mostly in the Pacific Northwest.

The Association sells annual memberships for a fee of \$45. The fee is not tax deductible because it is a tangible value containing various discounts.

Membership holders receive discounts on Association events, entrance into

Oregon museums, and a few discounts from national franchise businesses (such as discounts on car rentals, auto insurance, and California theme parks).

The Association is concerned with the decreasing membership rates of recent graduates. Association administrators want to better understand the perceptions young alumni have of the Association so they may address these perceptions and hopefully increase the membership rates of recent graduates.

Brand Strategy

According to the Association Marketing Director, the Association is positioned in the mind of alumni as a 'sub-brand' of, or a significant extension of OSU. In this way it is believed that alumni will pursue memberships because they have positive associations with the 'parent-brand' (OSU) and therefore will have positive associations with the 'sub-brand' (the OSU Alumni Association).

It is believed that student experiences and graduate reflections on their alma mater comprise the way alumni perceive and act toward OSU. Therefore, the Association would like to leverage the positive affections and attitudes alumni have for OSU into paid dues memberships.

Alumni Research

Alumni Associations are poorly described by the literature. Little academic research has been performed regarding the functioning of alumni associations, or investigation into the alumni university relationship. Furthermore, the activities of alumni associations differ greatly.

The majority of alumni association research investigates alumni motives and attitudes related to donor intentions and behavior (Pearson 1999a, Volkwein and Parmley 1999, Baade, 1996). This research is only tangentially related, at best, to investigations in this thesis because the OSU Alumni Association does not perform fundraising. Regardless, the body of fundraising research can inform this thesis regarding important dynamics related to alumni behavior toward their alma mater.

Alumni Fundraising: Attitudes, Perceptions, Experiences, and Institutional Control

Research regarding alumni donations may be summarized by four distinct research questions: *1) How do alumni attitudes and perceptions influence behaviors toward one's alma mater? 2) How do student experiences influence these attitudes and perceptions? 3) How do current life contexts influence alumni attitudes and intentions to donate? 4) How can universities better manage institutions to promote more generous donor behavior patterns?*

Many researchers investigating alumni giving patterns tend to approach the topic from a psycho-demographic perspective correlating alumni donations with their desire and ability to give (Volkwein and Parmley 1999, Connolly and Blanchette 1986). Pearson's research¹¹ takes this approach one step further (Pearson 1999b). Some of his initial research concerned a marketing question others had not asked: Why do most alumni not make gifts?

He held focus groups and performed surveys with bachelor-degree-holding alumni regarding the reasons why they do not donate to Stanford. His

¹¹ Pearson is the Director of Market Research at Stanford University's Office of Development.

approach measured alumni's awareness, perceptions, and attitudes toward

Stanford. He discovered that:

Alumni who are most satisfied with their student experiences are the most likely to remain engaged with the university; alumni who are most engaged are the most likely to read communications from the university; and those alumni who are most informed about the university are the most likely to remain engaged (1999b:7).

Furthermore, he discovered significant differences between alumni who are 'very satisfied' with their student experience and those alumni who are less satisfied. From his survey he learned that those who are very satisfied tend to value their Stanford education more than other alumni, take pride in their degree, have stronger personal dedication to Stanford, and are more likely to be donors (Pearson 1999b:8).

The most important findings of his research indicates that alumni who are more satisfied with their student experience are also more likely to view important features of their education as deliberately provided by Stanford, or that the quality of their education was attained through the university's design rather than by chance (Pearson 1999b:8).

Mulugetta, Nash, and Murphy (1999) likewise contextualized alumni donor practices in light of student experiences. They approached the issue from a macro-psychological perspective, where students and university administrators co-create the significance of university experiences. Mulugetta et. al's research design is a modification of Astin's (1993) Input-Environment-Outcome (I-E-O) model for assessing organizational affects. This model is a temporal trajectory beginning at some initial point and terminating at some end point; theoretically,

the end point should be predicted or shaped by intervening environmental factors. Specifically, Astin explains that inputs are the initial set of characteristics students have when they enter college or universities; they are then exposed to the environment which is composed of courses, faculty, programs, peers, and the like; the outcome is the set of characteristics describing the student at graduation, having been exposed to the environment.

Mulugetta et. al modified Astin's I-E-O model to include one more concept called institutional commitment, which they define as "the degree to which the institution sustains its intentions and acts to produce defined student outcomes by creating and reinforcing particular environmental circumstances" (63). The creation of the I-C-E-O model allows Mulugetta et. al to measure the effect of particular institutional programs designed for specific student outcomes. They evaluated the Cornell Tradition Program at Cornell University through their model. In Mulugetta et. al's opinion, the Tradition Program represents a specific institutional commitment to encourage graduates to donate to Cornell University. The tradition program is an undergraduate fellowship helping to cover part of the cost of tuition for approximately 5% of Cornell's undergraduates. The program was founded by a donor with the hopes that students would gain philanthropic motives and intentions toward Cornell.

The researchers surveyed 416 graduates with two populations: The treatment group representing those graduates who were part of the Cornell Tradition Program, and the control group representing students who were not part of the program. Variables related to inputs (gender, ethnicity, and parental

income) were recorded. Environmental variables were recorded (college, GPA, attendance of athletics, student groups, community service, Greek life, and other groups). They recorded current alumni contexts also as environmental variables (employment status, graduate degree, graduate status, income, loan status), and outcome variables (donations of time and money to Cornell).

A stepwise logistic regression comparison of the data resulted in several significant observations. Tradition informants were statistically more likely to be enrolled in graduate degree programs, have had higher average GPA scores as students, and have lower student debt than the control group. Furthermore, Tradition informants are more likely to be donors to Cornell, and donate a higher average amount of money per year. Also, Tradition informants have a higher mean score regarding their desire to volunteer for Cornell. Once more, the researchers underscore the importance of these findings noting that Tradition informant's parents' income was on average lower than non-informants.

McAlexander and Koenig (2001) pursued the topic of alumni attitudes and intentions from a relationship marketing approach. McAlexander and Koenig categorized alumni's attitudes, and perceptions toward their degree and professional career, their student experiences, and their alma matter through the use of customer relationship management variables.

McAlexander and Koenig's design is similar to the I-C-E-O model in that student experiences help shape the way alumni view themselves and their relationship with the alma matter. From conceptual observations gained by researching customer relationships with companies, McAlexander and Koenig

theorized that students likewise form relationships with universities. They explain that consumer relationships are formed from consumers' experiences with products, and relationships with institutions or companies.

McAlexander and Koenig performed a survey of 481 alumni regarding the variables from the constructs of institutional relationships, student experiences, and alumni's current relationship with the university. McAlexander and Koenig demonstrated that alumni relationships with their alma mater shape alumni behaviors regarding donating, purchasing licensed products, and recommending their university to others. Furthermore, they showed that student experiences and relationships with the university have significant influence on alumni's current relationship to their university.

Student Experiences, Alumni Values and View of Self

An even smaller pocket of research exists concerning the impact of university experiences on alumni's value systems and view of self. This research is important for better understanding the cognitive and social influences university experiences have in shaping alumni's world view.

Kassner (1990) observed that career occupational contexts have a significant influence on the way professionals view their professional success. She surveyed 395 alumni from the University of North Dakota and 226 residents of Grand Forks, North Dakota to determine what attributes people believe they possess causing them to be successful in their career. She observed that people's careers are strong predictors of the types of attributes people represent as the cause of their professional successes. Related research by Biddle, Barbara, and

Slavings (1990) indicates that students' values are both a product of their selected major and exposure to campus experiences.

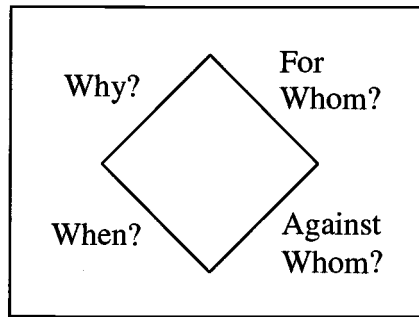
Valerie Fournier and Roy Payne (1994) studied the self-construction of university graduates as they entered the workforce. Employing Kelly's (1955) personal construct psychology—which explains that people's value systems shape the way they view the world and their selves, Fournier and Payne observed that individuals develop a concept of self based upon their interpretations of their professional tasks rather than specific role definitions. They observed that new self-constructs emerge from the correspondence between self-esteem and perceived role meaning. These constructs emerge from employees' investment in the belief that their work is effective, meaningful, challenging and adequate.

Managing the Association Brand Image

In order for the Alumni Association to capitalize on the alumni experiences and orientations toward their alma mater discussed in this chapter, the Association must carefully manage the brand associations alumni have for the organization. This is achieved by positioning the Association brand or creating a brand image with meaningful brand beliefs associated with it. Kapferer (1992) explains that there are four specific dimensions of brand image helping to position a brand in the mind of consumers. Kapferer demonstrates these brand image dimensions through the use of a four sided diagram (see diagram 11 below). The elements modeled are: 1) *Why*, representing the benefits justifying the use of the brand. 2) *When*, describes the occasions and contest in which the

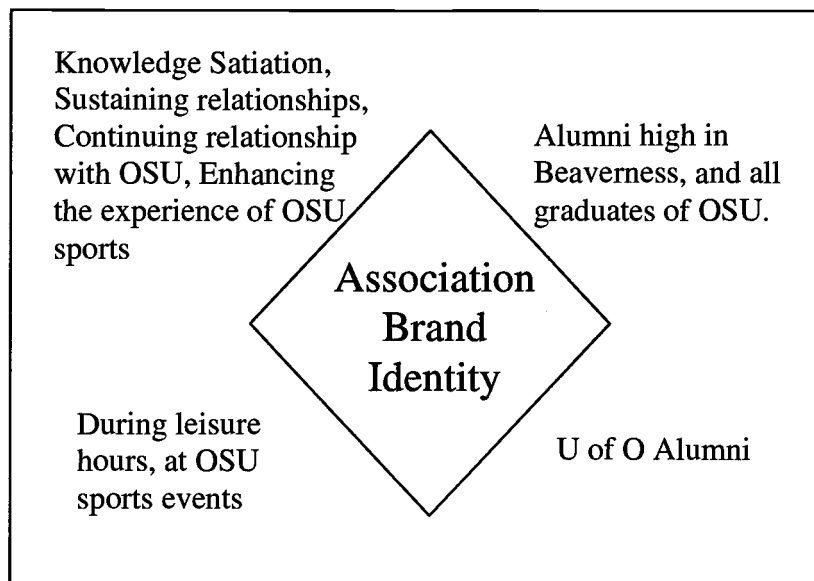
brand ought to be consumed. 3) *For whom*, represents the target audience that the brand ought to relate to. 4) *Against whom*, identifies those consumers not well served or identified by the brand.

Diagram 3: Brand Positioning Diamond, adapted from Kapferer



Given the mission statement for the Association and the forms of alumni programs they provide, and the Beaverness model, a likely brand positioning scheme for the Association's brand identity may be inferred. This hypothetical model is represented below.

Diagram 4: Association Brand Identity Positioning Model



Brand Extension

Clearly the literature in this chapter indicates that alumni develop affective ties with their alma maters stemming from their college experience, their current life context, and their continued exposure to their universities. The ability of the Association brand to have meaning for alumni, then, is dependent upon its formalization in a logical way as an extension of alumni's alma mater. This management strategy is called brand extension (Kapferer 1992, Aaker 1991), a process where aspects of one well known brand are associated with or extended to a new product line or company.

Association administrators express strong cognitive loyalty to the belief that the value of the "sub-brand" of the Association needs to be a successful extension of the "parent-brand" of OSU. This belief is so fundamentally held by the faculty of the Association such that they use it to explain alumni behavior toward the Association by way of alumni's brand loyalty (Reinarts and Kumar 2002b, 2002d) to OSU. Association faculty routinely explain that when attendance for alumni events is low that "more alumni would attend if they were [brand] loyal to OSU." By way of fiat these faculty have assumed a close brand extension between OSU and the Association. Association marketers are interested in better understanding the qualitative aspects of the OSU/Association brand extension.

In this thesis, the OSU/Association brand extension will be explored by Kapferer's (1992: 124-125) notion of brand extension. He states that the correspondence of the new product brand identity can be measured by its degree

of perceived similarity with the parent brand image. New products sharing a high degree of similarity with the parent brand are said to have a close extension; whereas, those products with few elements of similarity are said to be distant from the parent brand image.

Kapferer's brand extension model is a practical model for evaluating alumni brand perceptions grounded in their student experiences. Alumni's perception of university brands are related to their student experiences because those experiences continue to shape their self perceptions and orientation toward the world. Research by Kazem (1980), and Steven and Rosa (1994) demonstrate that university experiences continue to shape alumni's world views and perception of self. Likewise, Biddle, Barbara, and Slavings (1990) observed effects consistent with these stemming from student's curricular and extra-curricular activities; and Kassner (1990) and Valerie Fournier and Payne (1994) demonstrated how university experiences are continued through career and vocational contexts.

Similarly, McAlexander and Koenig (2001) demonstrate that university graduates continue to consume or experience their alma mater through consumer relationships formed by alumni's beliefs about their career, sense of self, relationship with other alumni, and university instructors. Temporal aspects of the alumni/university relationship are further substantiated by Mulugetta et al. (1999) who demonstrate that student experiences are continued into the alumni present and help shape alumni's intentions to donate to their alma mater. The literature in this section indicates that university graduates daily consume their

university experiences through beliefs linking vocational, ideographic, and sociological contexts to their university experiences.

Given that alumni continue to consume their alma mater in this way, use of the brand extension model is prudent for understanding the relative perceived similarity between university brand experience and alumni association brand perceptions. Alumni have, whether it is positive, negative or otherwise, particular beliefs about their university experiences they consume. These beliefs, then, comprise a set of brand associations or complete a brand image. The similarity between alumni's brand beliefs for the parent-brand OSU and the sub-brand of the Association will be evaluated through this research.

CHAPTER FOUR-METHODS

Methodological Needs

The Association chose to employ me in their research because standard research methods, specifically focus groups, have not worked for them in the past. The focus groups they performed quickly failed because most of the informants would yield deference to one or two informants who demonstrated experience and knowledge of the Association. Furthermore, they explain that in-depth interviews with alumni are often fruitless because alumni quickly demonstrate a deep lack of awareness regarding the Association and have anxiety at committing to being subject to an interview where they feel they have little to contribute. Additionally, Association marketers want to understand the brand beliefs of Association non-members, as well as members. However there is no real context to ethnographically observe alumni acting out their non-use of the Association¹² in order to infer how the Association has meaning in their lives.

There are three imitated methodological challenges produced by these insights: 1) In order to have research informants commit to and engage in this research they must believe they will be discussing topics of which they are knowledgeable. However, the Association is something most alumni have little knowledge about. 2) There are likely variable degrees of knowledge possessed by alumni about the Association which makes group participation difficult. 3) There are no ethnographic situations to observe unfolding as a processes.

¹² The only exception is the annual membership appeal the Association mails out to members and non-members. It may be said that the act of either paying or not paying the membership dues asked for in the mailer is a consumer activity which may be open to ethnographic observation. However, there is little access to make these observations.

Technique

I developed a photo-elicitation technique for gaining insights into informants views about their world and the relationship of OSU and the Association to their world. This method is a preferred method for this thesis because it rapidly provides large amounts of thoughtful autobiographical data. More conventional in-depth consumer interviews often last from an hour-and-a-half to two hours. I believe a two-hour interview would be intimidating to alumni who believe they have nothing to 'say' about the Association. Furthermore, photography is a directed activity that informants can use to visualize their role in the research process.

According to (Heider 1976: 19) visual imagery and ethnographic insights began as early as 1901 with Baldwin Spencer's documentation of Australian aborigines. The first ethnographic project where informants were given cameras to describe their cultural experience likely occurred in 1966 when John Adair and Richard Chalfen gave movie cameras to Navajo Indians in order to see how the production of movie themes differ between Navajo culture and Western culture (Heider 1976: 43). More recently, in their study of consumer meanings and the consumption of America Belk (1991) and Belk, Sherry, and Wallendorf (1988) also had research informants use video cameras and still photograph cameras to document their experience of consuming National Parks and other places during their cross-country travels.

A similar strategy was employed by Heisley and Levy (1991) in their research into the cultural meanings of American meal behavior where they gave

cameras to informants to photograph meal preparation and consumption. They explain the value of photo elicitation techniques in engaging informants and helping them react to the research data in more dynamic ways:

Unlike the usual interview, photographs challenge the respondent. A photograph motivates people to provide a perspective of action, to explain what lies behind the pictures, and to relate how the frozen moment relates to the reality as they see it. Informants feel compelled to fill in the details to guard the family against misperception (269).

Use of photographs is instrumental in understanding people's lived experiences. Counselors use still photographs in sessions where they gain better insights into people's relationships and perspectives about their life (Weiser 2001). Dana (2002) employed informants' photographs to understand the 'cultural self' of Native Americans and their perspective on access to health services.

The photographic techniques I employed are only vaguely similar to the ethnographic processes mentioned above. Since the non-consumption of the Association cannot be photographed, I had the informants generate photographs as a way for them to describe their world views and their place in it. The photographs served as substantial devices to project aspects of the informants' lived experiences into the interviews. Furthermore, by introducing photographs as projective devices informants become invested in the research process, and the photographs help develop hypothetical experiences which informants intentionally avoid in real life through their non-consumption of the Association.

The photo-elicitation method I employed is comprised of four phases as follows: 1) Initiation, in which photographic assignments are given to informants

to guide their photographic documentation of relevant issues, topics, and objects.

2) Thematic elicitation, where I explore the meanings contained in the informants' photographs with the informants. 3) Structural analysis, where informants demonstrate how themes, personal constructs, and meanings are related or different. 4) Association, where informants freely associate their themes, personal constructs, and meanings with their beliefs about OSU and the Association.

Initiation Phase

The research objectives in chapter three were generalized into questions. These questions were developed into photographic assignments where the informants resolve the research questions by carrying out photographic assignments.

I generated a ten question photograph assignment for the informants to complete (see appendix A). These photographic assignments concern sources of pride, sentiment, investment, uniqueness, identity, lifestyle, goal orientation, OSU experience, and a skill or habit learned at OSU. The value of these assignments is that they yield insight into how the informants' relate their campus and career experiences to their construction of their self concept and the relevance of this concept to their world.

Thematic Elicitation Phase

I conducted semi-structured interviews with the informants where they explained their reasons for composing the photographs and selecting the subject matter to complete their photographic assignments. I did not interfere with the narratives of informants concerning the subject of their photographs. In order to ensure that the informant and I referenced the same aspects and meanings associated with each photograph during the interviews, I recorded key words they used to describe the photographs. These words were then affixed to the photographs for continual reference during the interview. These words comprise the constituent elements of the perceptions informants have of their photographed subjects.

Structural Analysis Phase

During this phase I asked the informants to perform pile sorting activities. These activities were performed to determine how the informants view their selves by sorting objects according to their importance (Tan Tsu Wee, et. al 2003). In order to reveal personal constructs (Kelly 1955) I instructed informants to sort the photographs into two piles, with the larger pile containing things that are more important than those in the other pile. I asked the informants to describe the similarities between things which comprise the more important pile; and then I asked the informants to contrast those themes with the things sorted into the less important pile. These pile sorting strategies were employed to demonstrate the layered nature of the self (Tan Tsu Wee, et. al 2003). This is to suggest that

certain items or concepts are more central to ones sense of being than others. Lastly, I asked the informants to order the themes in the most important pile in order of importance.

I concluded by asking informants to imagine themselves five years from now and resort the piles into two, one more important and one less important. This task was performed to life themes related to their goal orientation. Admittedly, this final sort was a very abstract exercise and only produced significant associations in two interviews.

Association Phase

In the association phase I presented informants with a card with the words “Oregon State University” printed on it. I then asked them to reflect on the themes attached to the photographs. I asked them to describe their beliefs about OSU by placing those photographs with themes they would use to describe their experiences, reflections, and understandings about OSU. Once the informants were finished making these associations I asked them to describe the meanings behind the associations.

I performed the same associational tasks a second time except that I replaced the first card with a second card with the words “OSU Alumni Association” printed on it. During this phase I occasionally made forced associations where I intentionally chose photographs informants had ranked high in the initial pile sort, or photographs they associated with the card for “OSU” but did not place in proximity to the card for the Association. I asked the informants

for reasons why this association was or was not meaningful. This technique produced some latent insights that did not surface during the previous tasks.

The results of the structural analysis phase demonstrate how personal constructs (Kelly 1955) structure informants' ideas, beliefs, attitudes, intentions and behaviors toward OSU and the Association. Associations made with these cards demonstrate the lived brand perception and relationships informants have with OSU and the Association. Variations between these associations demonstrate the relatedness of the parent-brand OSU to the sub-brand of the Association.

Informant selection

A target number of 20 informants for this research was set, ten alumni who have graduated within the past five years and ten senior class students. Senior class students were selected to determine the transitional perceptions between students and recent graduates. Potential informants were contacted by phone and asked to participate following a description of the photography project and interview. Potential informants were also told they would receive fifteen dollars and an OSU tee shirt for participating. This was done to encourage participation by students and alumni who would otherwise not participate in an Association functions.

Methodological Reality

It took me approximately three weeks of calling potential informants to generate 20 informants. The cameras and photo assignments were distributed to informants and interviews were conducted following the development of the film. Eight informants, or forty-percent of those informants receiving cameras, did not complete the photo documentation. Follow-up calls were made to these informants. Those who were contacted explained that they did not have enough time to complete the project. All 12 who completed the photo project participated in the interview sessions. Interviews were held at a place of the informants choosing.

Informants suggested that this method contained a fairly high degree of validity. I asked each one to rate how well the project described their life on a scale of one to ten. The means score was 7.8 with a modal response of 8, and variation of 0.8444. Likewise I asked them how difficult it was to complete the project, and many explained that it was difficult to find something reflecting things they were thinking of. Several informants explained that the project was somewhat entertaining and helped them organize the way they think about their life.

However, a certain amount of irregularity persists in the informant populations as a whole consistent with challenges to narrative based research. Though male and female students are roughly equal at OSU, only 25% of the informants are male. Furthermore, while the largest college at OSU is the College of Liberal Arts, there are only three informants from this college while

there are four informants from the College of Engineering and Computer Science, which is smaller than the aforementioned college.

There are likely more female informants because women tend to participate more often in research projects. Furthermore, the researcher's gender is male and may have intimidated possible male informants because of the personal nature of the research. I have a guess at why there are more engineering and computer science informants represented in this sample. Possible informants were contacted by phone and asked to participate in this research. Many people declined saying that they did not have enough time. Ironically, those informants who agreed to participate are those who believe they have less available time. In a conversation with James McAlexander¹³, who often does marketing interviews with informants, I learned that the informants he routinely interviews tend to be people he sees as having the least amount of time at their disposal. I hypothesize that people who have less time at their disposal (assuming engineers and computer scientists are lacking in available time) are forced to schedule their time and are therefore better able to visualize their future commitments. Though they are 'busy' they better understand what additional tasks they can commit to.

Material Results

Following each interview I transcribed the interview from an audio recording into text. The text comprises more than 300 pages and there were an additional 75 pages of ethnographic photos.

¹³ Phd in marketing and co-owner of Ethos Marketing Research.

CHAPTER FIVE—ANALYSIS

General Structural Oppositions

I treated the narrative data as myths. Myths are valuable because they describe how one may resolve the challenges of daily life. The modern lifestyle is much like a myth because lifestyles are meaningful patterns people use to solve the challenges posed by their daily life. The pattern of life choices one makes in order to resolve these oppositions may be referred to as a lifestyle. Those life choices helping define one's beliefs about one's world are synonymous with the 'life themes' Fournier (1998) described as the basis for consumer brand relationships. Therefore, by understanding the way one's lifestyle is structured the meaning of one's consumptive rituals are better understood.

Additionally, it is important to understand that consumer needs do not define consumptive meanings. It is likely that some needs and wants are shared by many consumers' however, the lifestyles created by satisfying these needs are varied. This is so because beliefs about one's 'life-world' (Meaurly-Ponty 2002), personal situation, and cultural projections (Holt 1998) vary between people. Therefore, by understanding how consumers' consumption rituals are meant to resolve oppositions in their life-worlds the meaning behind the ritual of consumption can be understood.

This structural approach to meaning is warranted given Manning's (2001) interpretation of semiotics which suggests that meanings arise from experiences shaped by cultural structures. He warns against explanations which attend too

much to the phenomenal situation because treating “social [meanings] as an epiphenomenal product of the situation... in which society appears as a mere endless aggregate of iterated saturations” (60). Similarly, in order to preserve the contributions of culture in the ongoing construction of the self Douglas and Isherwood (1996, originally 1979) stress the importance of including structural analyses to complement phenomenal and ethnomethodological insights¹⁴. And the cultural structures which serve to shape meaning are embodied in symbolic narratives, or myths. Levi-Strauss (1963) states that people depend upon myths to construct their worlds because myths are symbolic social rules which are “good to think” (89) with.

Analytical Techniques

Since I am concerned with brands as symbols I will treat narratives as myths. Myths are stories that are neither true nor false but are always valid because they describe ways of living. By employing this approach to the

¹⁴ Douglas and Isherwood summarize their approach to studying consumption stating:

“the falsely abstracted individual has been sadly misleading to Western political thought. But now we can start again at a point where major streams of thought converge, at the other end, at the making of culture. Cultural analysis sees the tapestry as a whole, the picture and the weaving process, before attending to the individual threads.

At least three intellectual positions being developed today encourage such an approach.... Phenomenology started by taking seriously the question of our knowledge of other persons.... Knowledge is never a matter of the lone individual learning about an external reality. Individuals interacting together impose their constructions upon reality: the world is socially constructed.

Structuralism is a convergent movement whose implicit theory of knowledge transcends the efforts of the individual thinker, and focuses upon social processes in knowledge. In its many forms, modern structural analysis... affords possibilities of interpreting culture and of relating cultural to social forms, possibilities that outpace any approaches that doggedly start with the individual.

And finally... the movement in sociology called “social accounting” or ethnomethodology. This [theory] takes it for granted that reality is socially constructed and also takes it for granted that reality can be analyzed as logical structures in use. It focuses on interpretative procedures-on the methods of verification used by listeners, methods of proving credibility used by speakers, on the whole system of accountability which operates in everyday life. Their approach to the testing and confirming of information starts from the idea that meaning is embedded, that it is never easily picked from the surface of a communication.

narratives, elicited data becomes meaningful statements related to the informants' worlds. Therefore, analysis must also concern the relationship between structure and myth which makes narratives meaningful.

Levi-Strauss's (1967) structural study of myth demonstrates that myths are meaningful because they are stories about changes in status, from youth to adult, from non-member to member, and from life to death. Myths are meaningful because they are stories about the ways to successfully or unsuccessfully resolve structural oppositions. I refer to structural themes as knowledge concerning the mediation (attempted resolution) of structural oppositions. We may say that people's worlds are ordered by structures, and their lives in these worlds are knowable from the structural themes used to mediate the states brought on by the structures in their worlds.

This structuralist approach to the analysis of data is prudent in light of Susan Fournier's (1998) theory regarding brand relationships. She contends that brands have meaning because consumers anthropomorphize them, or symbolically act toward them as more than just things. Brands help to resolve life themes, and the affect consumers have for brands varies over time. Levi-Strauss's structural approach to the study of myth employs similar perspectives on the construction of meaning. He demonstrates that all myths are predicated upon the audiences' ability to empathize with the objects in myths. Levi-Strauss suggests that this is possible because myths employ thematic structures where objects and animals are anthropomorphized (1963: 87). Furthermore, his approach to structural opposition demonstrates how meaning is related to the

ability of myths to resolve underlying life themes. Similarly, Fournier's observation regarding changing levels of brand equity follows from the processes of anthropomorphizing brands and having life themes resolved through them.

I will achieve significant understandings about informants' cultural projections and the structural themes they use in shaping their worlds through structural analytical techniques specified by Maranda and Maranda (1971). They developed a set of techniques for the analysis of myth based upon Levi-Strauss's concepts of comparative analogy and conical analysis for the interpretation of myth. Maranda and Maranda approach to myth is that myths help people understand underlying oppositions in daily life and these myths describe how to resolve these conflicts. They achieve their analysis by compiling myths with similar themes Maranda and Maranda compare the ways actors in those myths mediate challenges or oppositions to either change an initial state or prevent the change of an initial state. They explain that in the beginning of a myth an initial state exists for the main character that is either positive or negative. Once this condition is established the actor is involved in a plot where this state is changed or not changed by one of four schemes or models (Maranda and Maranda 1971: 65, 88). Model I myths, or zero mediation myths, describe an initial state that persists throughout the myth with no attempt to change the state. Model II myths, or failed mediation myths, describe an initial state that an actor tries to mediate but fails to change. Model III myths, or successful mediation myths, describe how an actors mediation of an initial state nullifies that state and brings about a new state. Model IV myths, or successful mediation and transformation myths,

describe how an actor changes, or causes a transformation to, something in a myth responsible for causing the initial state. This permutation leads to a mediation of the initial state to a new state. Maranda and Maranda categorize myths according to positive and negative connotations. Those myths which conclude in positive states are models modified by positive markers (i.e. Model I+, Model II+, ...), and those myths which conclude in negative states are models modified by negative markers.

Generally, modern discourse can be understood as having the same structure as myths. For example, most all cultures have an 'Eden' myth explaining that there was a time in the distant past when things were nearly perfect. Some interceding event occurs to change the global state to a negative one. From there the myth describes how to act to bring about the prior positive state (i.e. abstinence of some behavior, ritual, or belief that ones corporal body will be transformed and rejoin the perfect order in some spiritual world). Similarly, older generations tend to use similar discourse patterns by intimating that 'times were better' in the 'golden years' during eras far removed from the present. These backdrops are used to validate their suggestions about what society needs to do in the present. Likewise, political speech tends to follow a similar order where special interest groups or politicians suggest that a present state needs to be mediated through some action they are legislating. In this way we see that the cultural projection about how society should be is related to some activity, and the discursive structures found in myths.

Overview of Analytical Findings

The topics covered by this research are consistent with mythical projections. The university context is a liminal state (Turner 1957, 1967) where students learn about the world they are going into and acquire the means to transform themselves for this new world. During the interviews for this research informants often related the context of leaving their parents' home to attend OSU in order to enter the world on their own following graduation. In this way their university experience is a ritual transformation of their self that involves learning about their world at the same time.

For the purposes of this thesis I will present the analysis of data in narrative format. Maranda and Maranda's structural analysis yields esoteric models which are not consistent with the conventions of qualitative research, where informants' narratives are presented as supporting material for analytical insights. In the analysis that follows I will extract key narratives supporting the insights following from the structural analysis of the data.

Many informants demonstrated oppositions structuring their life choices. These oppositions tended to revolve around the limited resources of time and money. On a very general level these oppositions concern opposition between the interests of loyalty and duty to family, vocational dedication and responsibility to one's career, and the freedom and independence inherent in the pursuit of leisure experiences. Because these resources of time and money are limited, the forgoing structural oppositions emerge (i.e., time allocated to career

diminishes ones capacity to fulfill obligations to family and leisure, and vise versa).

Two more sets of oppositions were observed throughout many of the interviews. These oppositions, however, were only occasionally related to scarcity of some resource. These oppositions were commonly used by informants to describe the perceptual ordering of much of their life world and are related to one's sense of self and one's inclusion in social groups. Generally I refer to the domains of these oppositions as acceptance versus marginalization, and self versus not self. I define these and other structural domains in table 1 below.

Table 1: Definition of Structural Domains

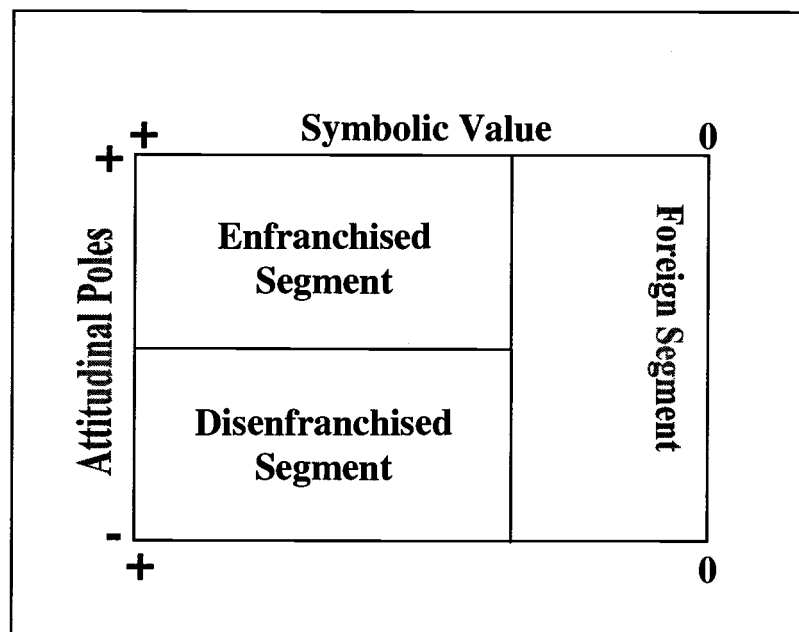
<u>Freedom (F)</u>	Freedom is likely a compound construct. Schouten and McAlexander (1995, 51-2) describe personal freedom as having two separate aspects: “liberation (i.e., freedom from) and license (i.e., freedom to).”
<u>Responsibility (R)</u>	Obligations that one is accountable for.
<u>Duty (D)</u>	An unspecified commitment to the well-being of a thing.
<u>Loyalty (L)</u>	A devoted attachment or fidelity to a thing.
<u>Acceptance (A)</u>	A belief that others view one in socially positive terms.
<u>Marginalization (M)</u>	A belief that one is not socially engaged with a particular collective.
<u>Independence (I)</u>	A state of self-sufficiency with respect to a particular aspect of identity or resource.
<u>Vocation (V)</u>	A professional role often requiring personal development.
<u>Self (S)</u>	Notions about ones social identity and how one represents ones self to ones self.
<u>Not Self (S', S⁻¹)</u>	Goffman's dramaturgical perspective suggests that in the maintenance of the self certain behaviors or choices cause the self to be <i>out of face</i> , or threaten ones identity or sense of self. These things may be said to oppose the self (S ⁻¹). Additionally, Belk points out that there are things or behaviors that simply have no relevance to one's belief in one's self representations (S').

Segmentation of the Informants

In categorizing the data three broad informant segments were established with respect to their attitudes and beliefs toward the Association. Levi-Strauss (1963) states that there are two primary dimensions which may be employed to

understand how people perceive things. He suggests that there are symbolic and attitudinal systems. In this way a thing may be said to have a high or low level of symbolic value, and there may be either positive or negative attitudes toward that thing. I have partly collapsed this grid under the belief that something low in symbolic value will similarly be low or inert in attitudinal value. The value of this logic is that it suggests a causal relationship where people must first have a symbolic interpretation for a thing before they may have an affective orientation toward it. Overall, this model is a simple way for making comparisons between and within groups of informants.

Figure 1: Symbolic Attitudinal Grid (SAG)



Informants who have strong symbolical beliefs and positive attitudinal orientations toward the Association are included in the enfranchised segment. Informants who have strong symbolical beliefs but negative attitudinal orientations toward the Association are included in the disenfranchised segment.

Lastly, informants for whom the Association has weak symbolic value tend to have neutral attitudes toward the Association and are included in the foreign segment.

Informants with a foreign orientation toward the Association have no way of using the Association membership to symbolically characterize their relationship to the university, the Association, or to use the Association membership to interact (Prus 1987a, 1987b) with things of significance in their world. Much like one who is a foreigner to a given culture the new culture's signs and symbols have no meaning. The disenfranchised segment uses their interaction with the Association membership to symbolically create space between themselves and OSU and/or the Association. For them committed non-possession of the Association membership serves to symbolically substantiate their identity and realities of their world. In contrast, informants in the enfranchised segment use Association membership to establish a positive relationship between their selves and the OSU and/or the Association, and further validate particular aspects of their identity or realities of their world.

Following the categorization of the informants consistent with the SAG, I arrayed the structural model data into three clusters with respect to these segments. The data is coded according to Maranda and Maranda's (1971) model for structural mediation. The data structure is contained in a matrix with domain oppositions comprising the columns and row indicators specifying correlation with the supra-ordinal brand (OSU) and or the sub-ordinal brand (the Association), (see Appendix B).

Data Analysis

The narrative data concerns the informants' lives in general. Two photo elicitation projects required informants to document something related to OSU. During the elicitation phase the researcher had the informants make proximal associations between their photographs and OSU and the Association. Analysis of the data yielded 31 key themes directly related to OSU (22 themes) and the Association (10 themes, one theme relates to both OSU and the Association).

The data matrix demonstrates obvious differences between the segments' orientation toward their experiences at OSU. These understandings emerge from inter-segment comparison made possible by arraying the interaction of the informants with OSU and the Association across the structural domains.

Vocation

Understanding vocational contexts are important in understanding how participants relate to OSU and the Association. Valerie Fournier and Payne (1994) demonstrate that people's vocational orientation is involved in their self constructs. Similarly, Biddle et. al (1990) suggest that students' values are largely shaped by their selected major, which may be viewed as part of the domain of vocation.

Insights from the research in this thesis suggest that the way alumni and students' perceive their vocation tends to contextualize their relationship with their family, their selves, OSU, the Association, and their career roles. The data suggests that some informants use vocational contexts to structure their

interpretations about their worlds. Conversely, others seemingly impose their social and personal experiences on their vocational expectations and perceptions. In conceiving what a vocation is one must supercede simple notions related to the concept of career and realize that for many people vocations help structure one's sense of self, validate one's life choices, and further structure one's beliefs about the world. Since many informants gave examples of their university experience as foundational to their vocation, this topic is important to understanding the continuation of the alumni/university relationship.

In one particularly memorable interview, the informant, a first generation student, heavily employed vocational themes in recounting her relationship with OSU. An adopted daughter of two custodians and mother of a young son herself, she shared the symbolic value of receiving a degree as it relates to satisfying the interests of family and vocation.

The informant pictured a scenic shot of the university's administration and library buildings which includes a sign spelling out "Oregon State University." This photograph was taken in response to the assignment to photograph something from an organization she was proud to be part of. In her interview, she expressed pride in OSU, which she embodied in familial and vocational contexts, stating:

I took this photograph to get a broad view of the university. I took it because I am the first kid from my family to go to college, and so I will be the first one from my family from a four year institution.... My parents encouraged me to attend because they wanted something better for me than what they had.... So this institution helped me get to this point [of receiving a degree and continuing into a career].

The informant, who is classified in the foreign segment, demonstrates how vocational demands require a transformation of self. In completing the photo documentation request for a representation of a skill, habit, or experience gained at OSU that shapes her life the informant pictured an abstract representation from the internet of a person thinking. She said this representation is of the quality of being 'open minded.' She plans on pursuing a career in public welfare and social services which, she explains, requires empathy and 'open mindedness' concerning her clients' situations. She employed this theme of open mindedness in discussing the value and nature of the courses she has taken at OSU and her perception of herself.

This informant, who is a student with senior class standing, went on to demonstrate strong vocational themes in contextualizing the importance of OSU to her. In rank order sorting of the importance of the photographs she ranked OSU second in importance behind her son stating, "In order to get a good job and move to the east coast I need to finish school."

In the second pile sort phase when she was asked to envision her life five years from now and rank order the photographs in importance, she ranked OSU last. She suggested that there would be no need to "think about OSU" once she had graduated and was gainfully employed. She demonstrates how OSU is only tenably fixed as an important symbol in her world helping to transform herself to be 'open-minded' and poses a degree which will help her achieve a career. However, her rationalization of her world yields an understanding where OSU

serves a transitory function in her life that is later fulfilled by possessing a college degree, rather than continuing to have a relationship with OSU.

During the last association phase the informant's beliefs were elicited concerning the Association. She stated that:

I always think of the Alumni Association as related to the university [OSU] and graduates. But I don't know what they do. The general assumption is that once you graduate from the university you become part of it or you can sign up to become part of it.

Since her rationale of relating OSU to graduation is for the reason of having a career she can equate not needing OSU with vocational preparedness. It follows then that she has a poorly defined concept of a post graduation relationship with OSU and therefore has no significant understanding of the Association.

Much of her narrative reflects the socializing effects of her parents helping to shape her vocational orientations toward OSU and ultimately the Association. Furthermore, her vocational focus helps to shape her interpretation of her course work and fulfillment and transformation of herself into being 'open minded.' Unfortunately for the Association, graduation orients her away from OSU and towards her vocation. And she equates the Association with OSU, meaning that following graduation her world has no use for the Association.

The orienting effects of vocation experienced by this informant are shared by others in the foreign segment. However, other informants exemplified dramatically different vocational orienting themes. The differences between these themes is instrumental in understanding the varied perceptions students and alumni have toward OSU and the Association.

As predicted by the SAG model the perceived vocational failings of OSU and the Association are responsible for negative attitudes experienced by the participants in the disenfranchised category. McAlexander and Koenig (2001) describe the alum/university relationship as being partly structured by experiences between students and faculty and beliefs about how university experiences contribute to their career success. The following narrative demonstrates how the alum/university relationship is partly negotiated between student and instructor and reevaluated in the alumni present.

One informant photographed her university textbooks as an OSU experience which helps shape her life. The themes elicited in discussing her associations with the photo reveal both positive and negative interpretations of her experience that ultimately conclude in a failed mediation between OSU and her vocation. Concerning her evaluation of OSU she states:

I took a picture of my schoolbooks because I saved all of my books [informant and researcher laugh]. Overall, I had a real great experience at OSU. I mean I loved learning all that I learned and the teachers in forestry were awesome. You are on a first name basis with them. You can talk with them anytime and they are more than willing to help you. They know you by sight because they have seen you so much. You can walk into the forestry building and say 'Hey. What's up.' On the rest of campus you are just one in a million. To me they kept me interested.

She shows how the socializing effects of her course work helping her to evaluate her OSU experience in a career context, as she stated:

The reason why I took the picture of the books is that my instructors stressed that this is what you learn to get a job. It didn't really help getting a job. I didn't have a job until January and I don't have a job in the field I want to be in.... I don't feel that OSU prepared me. My instructors kept saying 'don't worry you will have a job.' And of everybody I graduated with nobody has a job. So my experience at OSU was good, but after graduation it kind of has negative aspects about it.

Her post-graduation re-evaluation of OSU further concerns her present career context. She frames her evaluation of OSU in terms of her husband's university experience to his career. She states:

My husband went to school in Wyoming and he said they make sure you have a job when you graduate. They [the University of Wyoming] put that effort in and I think that is one thing that OSU is lacking. At the Alumni center they have a career-fair. The companies that attend were all focused on business and engineering and they never had anything for forestry. OSU just didn't help much. I'm in the one percent of the world [who has a degree] but if you can't get a job it doesn't stinking matter.

The informant's mediation of the conflict between OSU and her vocation help give insight into her relationship with OSU. The first and most important simplification of the narrative is that evaluations of OSU are fluid. In the informant's case, positive student experiences, friendly relationships with her instructors and an effective learning environment do not necessarily ensure positive post-graduation perceptions of OSU. Secondly, alumni employ expectations they learn from their student experience as well as their post-graduation experience in their interpretation of OSU. Third, students and alumni employ vocational differences to define their relationship with OSU (i.e., forestry versus engineering and business).

Another disenfranchised student employed similar themes in demonstrating how she believes OSU has failed to help her achieve vocational goals. During the association phase of the interview the informant described why many things important to her could not be associated with OSU. Her evaluation partly stems from a perceived preference by OSU for engineering students to the neglect of students in other departments. She states:

They [university administrators] should make a connection with the students, instead of living in the clouds. I don't think they care about students. Look at the new engineering hall. They are remodeling it. I think it's called Weatherford Hall. It looks real nice, but my first gripe is *why engineers?* Why do they get that? There are so many other places to spend the money to make all the students feel wanted.... They want to be the number one engineering school and they want to be the football school. I don't think they care about the average student. I just don't.

The narratives thus far substantiate McAlexander and Koenig's (2001) insights about the alum/university relationship. Since the context for this relationship is partly related to vocational achievement this relationship must necessarily be sensitive to one's concepts about society. Garfinkel (1967) explains that people's actions comprise a series of relational activities representing negotiations between the practical demands of people's lived experience and the expectations of society. The following narratives demonstrate how participants employed various negotiations between themselves and OSU to achieve their desired societal goals.

A student classified in the foreign segment demonstrated how knowledge from her family's experiences helps her negotiate the possible conflict between OSU and her vocation. Her sister, who graduated from college, has not used her degree to pursue her career. From this example the informant, a senior student at OSU, does not infer a necessary connection between OSU, receiving a degree, and her vocation. Instead, she feels a need to mediate the divide between OSU and her vocation through a rigorous goal-oriented commitment to course work and extracurricular activities. To resolve the photo-documentation exercise concerning an OSU experience helping to shape her life, the informant photographed steps ascending to the base of the student union building at OSU.

This photograph is an abstract representation of her goal oriented work ethic.

Concerning the intended meaning of her photograph she states:

These are the granite steps leading up to the Memorial Union. I didn't want the picture to be like orange. My impression of the photograph is of a firm foundation that is elevating toward my future goals, helping me to get to them.... I've really been able to use my OSU experiences. I know a lot of people are not able to use their experiences as well as I have. Like my sister who isn't really using her degree. I'm really focused on interior design so I'm concerned with what I can do to make me the best candidate for an interior design position. I've really been involved in a lot of clubs and competitions, trying to do my best so that it will help my future career path. But other people are like, 'You know I did college. It's good to have a degree.' But I like trying to really build upon everything I've done here.

Still another informant from the disenfranchised category demonstrated complex reasoning unifying his OSU experience, and his beliefs about himself and vocation, as they relate to his relationship with the Association. During the elicitation phase, the informant, an engineering graduate, demonstrated life themes related to being utilitarian, independent and self-sufficient and committed to a rigorous work ethic.

The informant completed the photo-assignment concerning an organization he was proud to participate in with a picture of military medals he had received. For him these medals represent a transformation of himself from something ill-defined to an identity that is more resolute and complete. His military duty was completed between two separate phases of his undergraduate coursework. He used the challenges of his military experiences to distinguish himself from other students, stating:

There are a lot of accomplishments here [pointing at the photograph of the military medals]. They stand for something I did well and those

experiences helped me to grow. It took me probably eleven years to get through school. A lot of people who leave school just don't go back.

He further expressed the themes of self-sufficiency when he was asked to reflect upon an aspect of his character or personality through another photograph. He pictured two books of Ann Rand, *Fountain Head* and *Atlas Shrugged*. For him these books underscore the importance of a self-sufficient ethos. He described the metaphorical importance of these books saying:

These books pretty much describe me. In a nutshell these books explain that you should not have anything handed to you. You should work for what you have. That's kind of the way my life has been lived. I was in the Army overseas in a third world country and got to see things a lot of people here don't. That kind of helped shape my philosophy.

He further unified these themes with an austere and committed student lifestyle which he represented with a photographic collage involving college text books, a wrench, a hard helmet, a watch, a bottle of beer, and *Hamburger Helper*¹⁵. In his interpretation of this photo the theme of 'work hard, play hard' emerged suggesting that things worth having must be earned. The informant explains the meaning in producing the photograph stating:

I photographed some text books, a Bud-Light and some Hamburger Helper. Anybody that has been to school [informant and researcher laugh]... knows that they need to be mechanically inclined to work on their piece of junk car because you don't have money. The Hamburger Helper represents the *fine* cuisine. The books and hard helmet represent a lot of hard work. The Bud-Light¹⁶ represents work hard, play hard. And the watch represents time management.

In the association task involving the Alumni Association this informant played with the notion of what the Alumni Association is. Having no clear

¹⁵ Hamburger Helper is a noodle and sauce food staple that meat is added to. People often choose to prepare this diet as a less expensive way to include meat in the main course of their dinner.

¹⁶ A brand name for a domestically produced American beer.

concept of the Association, he employed his beliefs about his world to suggest what the Association should not be: A bureaucracy dependent upon public funding. His concept of what the Association ought not be serves to sustain his commitment to his world. The informant made only one association between his photographs and the Alumni Association, the photograph of Ann Rand's books. He explained his reasoning for this association saying:

What I consider an alumni association...uhm, every group, every bureaucracy has a reason for being. As I understand it the reason for the Alumni Association is to maintain touch with the...there are probably many reasons. To maintain touch with alumni that make it up.

I don't feel that an alumni association should be asking for handouts from anybody that's not directly associated with it. In other words, they probably shouldn't be getting tax money for it. I doubt if they are, but that's the reason I put the Ann Rand picture here. It should be a self-sufficient entity that looks out for its own well being and of its members.

Though his answer is a rather non-descript portrayal of the Association, it is insightful. In an attempt to elaborate on the informant's perception of the Association I tried to elicit latent meanings from photographs that he did not associate with the Alumni Association.

To achieve this end I slid the photographs of the military medals and the collage photo of his university experience next to the card I used to represent the Alumni Association. I asked him if these proximal associations had any meaning for him, or if there were any particular reasons why these things (representations of his accomplishments, hard work, and self sufficiency) could not be associated with the Alumni Association. His interpretations of the Alumni Association forwards a notion that it favors alumni of a particular university experience who have hedonic orientations. He suggested that the meanings of the Alumni

Association are polysemic and depend upon one's 'perspective,' which he correlates with vocations learned at OSU. His reaction and words to this forced association are reproduced here:

The Alumni Association could be more than what it is. You go to Oregon State because...let me put it in my perspective. Engineering students don't go to engineering school for fun. You know you might go into marketing; you might go into home-economics; I'm not putting them down or anything. But at Oregon State it's a tough freaking road-to-hoe. Uhm, so you'll probably get different answers from people who have different majors.

I remember what it is like. God, they make it so... they do everything possible that they can to trigger you sometimes. You know you must come to class at seven o' clock on a Saturday morning sometimes. They don't give a shit that you have to drive 50 miles, you know. And it's a Saturday. They do stuff like that. And people just... somehow it just thins itself out¹⁷.

So if you're going to Oregon State to be an engineer you're there for the education; versus if you're going to Oregon State for, gee, 'I don't know what I'm going to do I think I'll take basket weaving and hang out at the fraternity, and party down every Friday and Saturday night.' Well a lot of that goes on too, because... well, it just does.

So I guess what I'm getting at is there are going to be completely different ways of looking at their experience at OSU. If someone is there for their education and trying to better themselves versus somebody who is there trying to drink beer and hook up with chicks. And there are people like that there.

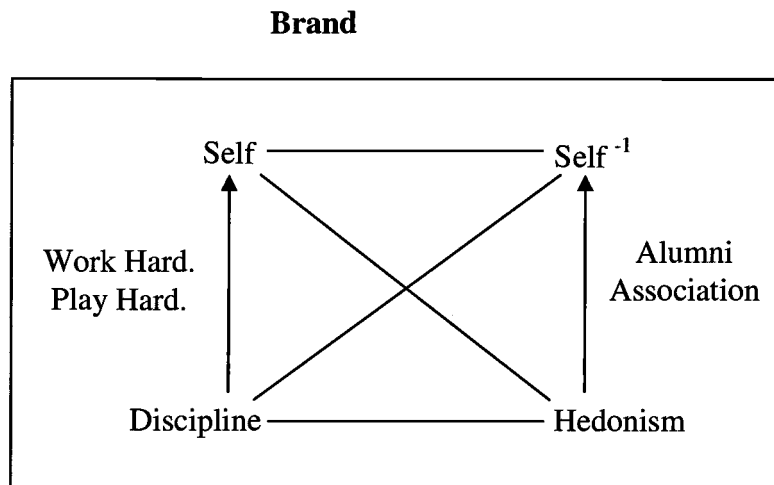
This informant's interview demonstrates how alumni interpret the Association's brand in order to mediate the structures of their world. Based upon his view of self, the informant has formalized an identity consistent with his vocational and university experiences. It is important to note that this identity is partly contrasted with his perception of graduates from other colleges at OSU. As Kapferer (1992) predicts, the way this informant has differentiated alumni from

¹⁷ The informants use of the words 'triggering' and 'thinning-out' are references to a belief that some university departments place a heavy work load on students in an attempt to cause some students to drop out of the program.

OSU determines 'who' he believes the Association brand is for and who it is against.

This informant mediated the oppositions of Self//Not Self, and Vocation//Duty with themes of discipline through his self-sufficiency, accomplishments, and austerity. His commitment to being disciplined helps us to understand further his brand relationship with the Association. This brand relationship is best depicted through the use of a semiotic square (as shown below in diagram 3).

Diagram 5: Representation of Informants Perception of the Association



This diagram suggests that the identity of the self is opposed to the negative concept of the self and is contrasted with hedonism. The identity opposing the self is contrasted with being disciplined. Furthermore, the Alumni Association brand is complicit with hedonism and/or appropriate for those alumni who sought fun student experiences. His perception of the Association's brand is opposed to his motto which gives meaning to his world: Work hard. Play hard.

The informant's concept of the opposition of the self with people from other vocations is shared by other alumni and students from the college of engineering. Though this informant exemplified probably the most extreme commitment to this opposition, other informants explain that their engineering coursework and career are so demanding that they have little time for other pursuits. In fact, so pervasive is this belief in the rigorous demands of engineering coursework that members of this culture have seen fit to hang a poster in the engineering computer lab that makes humorous light of this student experience. The poster is a close-up photo of a male student smiling at the poster's audience. The words below him interpret his disposition, reading, "It's my future. I want to be an engineer. Sex can wait."

The forgoing narratives do much to advance a view of the alum/university relationship being a dynamic relationship contrasted with nostalgic, or static impressions of their student experiences. As Douglas and Calvez (1990) predict, the meanings that informants attach to OSU and the Association have much to do with how they believe society ought to be and how they believe they are manifest in society. These cultural projections (Holt 1998) are clearly shaped by beliefs about how vocational challenges should be surmounted via one's university experiences. Additionally, Rosenberger's concept of the centrifugal self (1996, 2001) is instrumental to understanding how informants rationalize meanings as a way of symbolically defining ontological aspects of vocational roles¹⁸. The later

¹⁸ Though Rosenberger's work largely focuses on the nature of gender in consumption, gender is a cultural construct. As such, vocational roles are similarly constructs helping people to orient themselves toward the world (Valerie Fournier and Payne 1994, and Biddle et. al 1990).

informant was rather clear about the importance of achieving the right kind of OSU experience in order to be in the world as an engineer.

Many of the following narratives are from informants categorized in the enfranchised segment. They tend to employ warm social student experiences to frame their beliefs about their vocations. In this way their relationship to OSU is all at once infused with warm associations that reaffirm their social acumen and vocational efficacies. Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) optimal experience theory predicts that informants in the enfranchised segment will likely have positive attitudes toward their relationship with OSU. This theory explains that people tend to experience enjoyable moments because their perception of their experience is consistent with their value or goal orientations. During these experiences people are said to be in a state of *flow* where people are confronted by complex elements and objectives but seemingly negotiate these complexities in what feels like an effortless manner. This is similar to those moments when athletes are said to be 'in the zone' or experiencing a feeling that time has slowed down as they effortlessly negotiate complex defense patterns presented by the opposition or coordinate the varied actions of their body in concert with the needs of the sport. Narratives from enfranchised informants demonstrate many similarities with the concept of being in flow, as they explain how being comfortable in social situations allows them to deal with the complexities of their vocation.

One enfranchised informant, a graduate who describes herself as a homemaker and caretaker of her two daughters, recounts her OSU experience as

being socially rewarding and carefree. Furthermore, she is able to mediate a unity between her familial obligations and OSU by transforming her curricular experiences to fit her family's needs.

This informant photographed many scenes of OSU to complete the photo documentation assignment. Regarding the photo of a skill she has learned at OSU, helping to shape her life, she photographed the student union building to represent the social and life skills she gained there. Describing her student experiences in this photograph she states:

As an undergraduate we [the informant and her husband] just kind of relaxed playing with the dogs. It just reminds me of kind of the greenery and the trees. OSU is a very comfortable place for me. It's very inviting. It's very homey. That's why I liked this college when I went here. A little bit relaxed. A little bit slow paced.

Also, socializing and informality are important themes framing her evaluation of her curricular experiences. She took a second photograph to complete the photo assignment of an OSU skill or habit shaping her life. She photographed a foyer area at her university department. The meaning she attached to this photograph concerns acquiring social skills that are both important for professional, familial, and casual settings. She explained the photo saying:

This is where students hang out and spend time in groups. We just kind of come together as groups to accomplish things. Kind of just talk and connect.

You learn more important stuff when things are just said in passing that really helps you out. Being able to hold these side conversations in small groups of people is really a skill I didn't have before. I think this is an important habit in everything I do, from communication, to family and friends, to a job actually working with people in the work place. You are very seldom just doing something on your own. I think communicating is a learned skill. I don't think I came by it naturally.

Other informants in the enfranchised segment were members of the OSU Greek Life community¹⁹. All of the students and alumni I have talked with regarding their perception of the Greek system unanimously exclaim that the system helped them develop a better social ethic. One informant went so far as to extol the virtues of the Greek system stating, “My cousin was a real asshole when he lived in the dorms. Then his parents made him move into a house [join the Greek system] and he quickly learned how to interact with others.”

The slogan used to market the Greek system to incoming freshmen adopts quasi social terms: “Scholarship. Service. Leadership. Adventure.” These slogans were appropriated by some informants in their interpretation of their OSU experiences, to define their own identity, and organize their expectations of and orientation toward their vocation. The term most often used as a mediating theme is the notion of being a “leader.”

Though the informants demonstrated how their participation in the Greek system helped developed leadership roles for them to assume, they invariably talk about leadership as a personal quality often void of role definition. In this way informants use the notion of leadership synonymous with an extreme form of social acceptance where others “look up to them” even in informal situations. Invariably, the informants explain how their leadership qualities lead them to a particular relational status with the campus community they describe as “being involved.” Students who are said to be involved are students who participate in numerous extra-curricular activities.

¹⁹ Greek Life is on campus housing communities comprised of fraternities and sororities.

One informant, who was the president of his fraternity, the Inter-Fraternity Council, and honor society, explained how his leadership roles at OSU transformed him from an asocial high school graduate to an 'involved' OSU student. He also explained how the social aspects of being a leader helped him interpret the meaningful aspects of his OSU experience as it relates to his vocation. He recounts his transformation as follows:

I wasn't involved in anything in high school. My leadership ability definitely comes from my OSU experience. Well, you know it's a weird thing. My freshman year in my fraternity the president of the fraternity asked me if I would like to be the chair of the recycling committee. Recycling cans, big job [saying sarcastically]. [informant and researcher laugh] But for some reason... We had two people on my committee and I really got into it. I sat in on the executive meetings and gave them my report on how recycling is going. If I hadn't been asked to take cans back I never would have run for the president of my house, or the Inter-Fraternity Council.

A large part of my experience at OSU, I would say ninety to ninety-five percent of what I learned happened outside of the classroom. I had some great professors, but what I really learned at OSU had nothing to do with the actual school. The two most important things I learned were social skills and communication skills.

Another informant from the enfranchised segment reflected similar orientations towards her vocation and her OSU experiences organized by the theme of leadership she gained from her sorority membership. Furthermore, she demonstrates complex schemes for the permutation of vocational domains into social domains, which she mediates through the theme of leadership.

To complete the photo project regarding an image summarizing her OSU experience, the informant photographed a newspaper clipping of an article covering a recent OSU football bowl victory (called the Fiesta Bowl). This clipping is framed and mounted on her wall. For the photograph representing a

skill she acquired at OSU she pictured a shirt from a retail outlet where she is an assistant manager. The newspaper clipping reflects her social and hedonic orientations toward her student experiences, and the shirt illustrates the leadership skills she learned from these settings. Her construction of the meanings and contextualization of these experiences and skills resolves apparent oppositions between vocation and social acceptance. Her rationalization of her world is as follows:

Representing my overall experience of OSU, I took a picture of the Fiesta Bowl newspaper. And the picture says fun! Because my experience at OSU was definitely fun. It incorporated football games and good times with friends. Being able to meet people. All of my experiences at OSU are about fun and not much educational stuff. I think I learned a lot about life which is what you do. Because you can learn from books anytime.

I took a picture of this shirt because that's where my job is now. The skill that I learned at OSU helping me get into management is leadership. When I was at OSU I was a leader in my sorority. And I think I was somewhat of a leader in the classroom.

The informant's leadership orientation becomes a mediation device helping to transform classroom situations from a formal environment of 'book knowledge' to a social climate of 'life knowledge.' Following this transformation the informant is able to successfully resolve academic challenges through social or leadership activities.

Interesting observations emerge from the inter-segment comparisons of vocational orientations. One disenfranchised informant exemplified how commitment to the theme of discipline provides him with the symbolic means to oppose his vocational orientation with hedonic orientations. Conversely, this enfranchised informant has demonstrated how her construction of the theme of

leadership helps her to construct a unity between hedonic experiences and vocational expectations.

Regarding the enfranchised segment, socially bound vocational orientations, student experiences, and views of their identity seem to have direct bearing on their perception and relationship with the Association brand. One enfranchised informant describes his reason for being an Association member, stating, “Because of my student experiences as a leader it makes the Association a bit more to me, than it would had I been one of those students who comes to campus and doesn’t get involved.” Interestingly, just as a disenfranchised informant had used his discordant relationship with the Association to construct symbolic differences between him and those he considers appropriate alumni for the Association; this enfranchised informant has used his positive relationship with the Association to establish symbolic distance between himself and alumni who were ‘not involved’ as students. Other enfranchised informants demonstrated similar beliefs.

A frequent thematic association many disenfranchised informants shared concerning OSU and the Alumni Association were university experiences typified by social marginalization. As predicted by the above enfranchised segment, notions of being an involved student are consistent with the suitability of joining the Association. One disenfranchised alum describes her relationship with the Association by linking it to her socially marginalized student experiences at OSU. “We get those mailers for Alumni Association picnics and that is somewhat intimidating because I didn’t know a whole lot of people at OSU,” she

states, relating the belief that she was not involved at OSU because she was a transfer student. Many engineering informants demonstrated similar beliefs concerning social marginality at OSU stemming from heavy course work.

For other graduates the notion of acceptance and marginalization seems to center around committed attachments to OSU athletics. All of the informants in the enfranchised segment demonstrated how their support for OSU athletics either helps sustain their relationship with OSU, feel socially engaged with others, or helps mediate stronger relationships with their family. One informant illustrated how attending OSU athletic events are a way to satisfy both her personal and family's interests attending OSU football games. Not only did she identify the Association as being integrally involved with OSU athletics, but she continued to derive a community level of social acceptance symbolically mediated by her and her family's commitment to OSU athletics. She states that her family likes to travel to Bend, Oregon, for vacations because "Bend seems to be a Beaver oriented town where there are tons of OSU fans."

However, these 'Beaver' communities symbolically sustained by shared interests in OSU athletics are socially marginalizing to others. One disenfranchised informant explains how an OSU bumper sticker on her car is cause for social discomfort. "When I go to get gas there are times when people make 'Beaver' comments to me," she said. "I guess it's a conversation piece. They usually start by saying 'Go OSU.' Then they want to talk about sports or why they don't like the Ducks. I have nothing to say because I know nothing about sports."

Thus far the analysis has concerned the ways by which vocational, social, and identity bound orientations affect informants' perceptions of and relationships with OSU and the Alumni Association. This analysis shows that student and alumni expectations and contextualization of their vocational and student experiences are shaped by their parents, their university instructors and coursework, and their extra curricular experiences. The product of this socialization determines how alumni integrate their university experiences into their vocation, how they relate to OSU, and ultimately how they relate to the Alumni Association and other alumni. Furthermore, this analysis demonstrates how these socializing processes define the manner by which oppositions between domains of vocation, sociality, and the self must be mediated. It can be logically drawn from this analysis, then, that alumni do not necessarily form positive relationships with the Association because they view their university experiences as valuable. Informants in all three of the segments hold strong beliefs that OSU has, in some way, positively helped shape their identity, vocational efficacies, and or relations with others. There are, however, obvious qualitative differences between alumni's worlds determine the value the Association holds for them. This is so because there is little coherence between informants regarding what the OSU experience is, why OSU is important, and what OSU can be throughout the life of an alum.

Many impressions of the Association were shared by all of the informants, whether these interpretations are factual or not, the informants believe the Association is: involved in fundraising, a way to enjoy university athletics, and

organization that hosts social events for alumni. Furthermore, most informants described the same ideal alumni for whom the association is designed: Alumni who were “involved” in social activities as students.

Given this insight, it is obvious, that inter-segment agreement about the perception of the Alumni Association brand is not responsible for the difference in alumni/Association brand relationships. Therefore it is not only important to know the semiotic understandings alumni have of the Association, but also important to determine how alumni use these brand meanings to resolve various structural oppositions in their lives: How they resolve life themes through the symbolic consumption of the Association brand (Susan Fournier 1998).

One opposition yet to be analyzed is that between independence and loyalty. Informants in the enfranchised segment demonstrate how either OSU or the Association serves to mediate these oppositions. Conceptualization of this opposition is rather difficult. I will illustrate this opposition through contrasts between the cases. One informant in the foreign segment demonstrated how her identity and activities were largely defined by familial needs. As an identical twin, she explained that many of her self-concepts and activities involve her sister and parents. Her initial struggles at OSU revolved around her new identity formation and self-sufficiency void of her sister’s and family’s continued influence. She metaphorically likened her former status with her family to that of ‘being in a shell,’ a protected environment where she was dependent upon her family for fulfillment of her needs. She states that, “Being at OSU pulled me out of my shell. It taught me to feel more comfortable being on my own.” She went

on to lament over the fact that her time at OSU is taking her away from being with her younger brother. She demonstrated guilt at being an older sister not being able to support her brother with in such activities as his high school prom²⁰.

This informant's experience demonstrates the liminal aspects of attending college which symbolically transformed her status from one contextualized by her concept of being in a familial 'shell,' to one of independence from this state. She also demonstrates how this transformation fails to adequately mediate the opposition between independence and familial loyalty. However, many informants categorized in the enfranchised segment demonstrated unique contexts where the opposition between independence and familial loyalty are adequately resolved through continuing attachment to OSU.

Informants in the enfranchised segment often explained how their enrollment at OSU was a fulfillment of familial expectations because other family members had attended OSU before them. These informants demonstrated that not only is graduation from OSU important to their fulfillment as individuals, it is also important for strengthening their connection to their family tradition at OSU. In this way the opposition between independence and loyalty is mediated through the unity of sharing their OSU experience.

Furthermore, this unity of independence and loyalty serves to continue alumni's orientation toward OSU following graduation. Recalling the informant, who will be a first generation college graduate, fulfillment of her family's expectations occur when she graduates from OSU and receives a degree.

²⁰ High school proms as annual formal dances often symbolizing various rights of passage in American culture.

However, her orientation toward OSU will discontinue following graduation. In contrast, for many enfranchised alumni graduation from OSU does not lead to a lessening in orientation toward OSU. Their continued orientation toward OSU helps them to realize significant symbolic ties with through the Association. This theme is clearly exemplified by one enfranchised informant who states:

The reason I chose to go to OSU is that my family and parents went to OSU. When I think of OSU I think of all the wonderful things I did there with my family. And as a student I really looked up to the alumni as people who have really accomplished things. This is why my husband and I joined the Alumni Association. I think it keeps us in touch with OSU. Most of my family and friends are alumni.

For her and others with similar experiences OSU has been part of her family activities well before attending OSU and continues to be a significant experience to her following graduation. Commitment to the Alumni Association is a meaningful mediation between the domains of family, identity, OSU, alumni and friends. For those in the foreign segment a relationship with the Association has no such symbolic currency. And for others in the disenfranchised segment a discordant relationship with the Association helps sustain the integrity of vocational, social, and ideographic domains in their world.

However, family ties to OSU must be carefully developed. The following informant demonstrates how, even though many of her experiences are similar to informants in the enfranchised category, she is disenfranchised from the Association because her beliefs about the Association's brand are inconsistent with her lifestyle. The informant identifies herself as one who was 'involved' in campus life as a student. She referred to herself as a "socialite" who lived in a sorority and received grades below her potential because she spent more time

socializing than doing course work. Furthermore, she notes that her family is heavily connected to OSU because both her father and brother attended OSU. Below she identifies her negative attitudes towards the Association stemming from her perception that it is heavily associated with football and sports culture. She further contrasts her negative associations with sports with positive attitudes toward academics:

The major disappointment I have with the Alumni Association is that it seems to concentrate strictly on OSU's sports. I didn't go to school to be involved in athletics and I still have no interest in them what so ever. It is unfortunate that our society places such a high degree of importance on sports rather than academics. I did attend games while in school and had a good time doing so, but not because I was watching the game. Rather, I used those games to socialize. I have attended a couple of Portland alumni meetings but I really have no interest in being pumped for money for the OSU football team. I don't care to listen to the coach and I don't care to hear about how we're finally going to do well.

I have to tell you a number of my friends who have also attended social network meetings agreed with me on this. We attended to see if there was someone we might know there. After attending a couple of meeting I gave up realizing the whole focus of the Alumni Association is based on sporting events.

I do attend Business School events and I enjoy running into my friends that were also in the business school and looking for opportunities to network. If the Alumni Association would broaden its purpose I might enjoy attending those meetings too.

The informant demonstrates how her interpretation of the Association causes her to view the organization as alienating for her and her friends who share an ethos contrary to investment in sports.

Summary of Analysis

The analyses compared differences in student/university and alum/university relationships (McAlexander and Koenig 2001) shaping informants perception of OSU and the Association. Insights into these

differences were gained by comparing informants categorized into one of three segments (enfranchised, disenfranchised, and foreign). I determined that the differences in these relationships between groups of informants do not follow from different perceptions of OSU or the Association; rather, the differences are largely shaped by the cultural projection (Holt 1998) concerning what one's world 'ought' to be like (Merleau-Ponty 2002).

This conflict about what the OSU community ought to be gives rise to the opportunity to realize the type of community described by St. John (2001) as heterotopias. This concept suggests that collective consumption may be embodied by a communal affect even though consumers do not share a commitment to an ideal ethos. In this way collective consumption is shaped by multiple subjective standpoints (Sherry and Kozinets 2004), or cultural projections. That ethos which is shared by heterotopic communities is a function of community rather than the structure of the community. That ethos, by necessity, rather than by design, is respect for diversity.

St. John (2001) employed Turner's (1967) concept of liminality to interpret the communal structure and meaning of ConFest, an annual festival of complimentary and competing groups in Australia. St. John's use of the concept of liminality concerns the collective inter-structure of the consumption community, or periodic regulation of the concept and mores of the community (St. John 2001: 48). He argues that "cultural heterotopias are liminal realms. They are thresholds fomenting the (re)creation of alternative identities, effecting alternative orderings" (51). St. John states that in these heterotopic spaces people

try to project their utopias or ideas about society and “that which is authentic or sacred to one group or individual may be profane or inauthentic to another” (54). He concludes that the ConFest community has solidarity toward needing to (re)create community without sharing an archetypal concept of utopia for the maintenance of this community.

The narratives in this research demonstrate that there are many differing projections about what OSU is. It is in the Association’s interest to create a Circuit-of-Culture (du Gay et. al 1997) where all interested alumni can participate in the (re)creation of the OSU community. However, the Association’s Beaverness model does much to lead the management of the organization towards being a utopian community rather than a more inclusive heterotopic one. This occurs because the Association employs its interpretation of Belk’s (1988) extended self theory instead of approaching the topic of alumni interests and motive from a cultural perspective. This is evident in the way they internalize insights from this research.

In presenting results of this research to Association administrators they became quickly fixated on the narrative of the informant who describes herself as socially active in OSU organizations but very much against the Association because of its sports orientation. Association administrators were naturally troubled by the fact an alum who is involved in the campus community would be so strongly against being ‘loyal’ to the Association. However, their fears were quickly allayed when they realized that this informant’s case supports the Beaverness model. They explain that the profile of this informant ought to yield

a more loyal alum but she is less loyal because she is not bonding with significant OSU symbols, often associated with attending university athletics. One administrator explained that he was much like the informant, involved in campus community but did not attend OSU athletics and rarely participated in alumni functions. However, he explained that a few years ago he attended an OSU football game and began to wear OSU sponsored clothing. From that point on he believes he bonded with these symbols and learned to see himself as a loyal alum wanting to participate in the Association.

It is because of Association administrators' investment in marketing theory that they have been lead away from a deeper understanding of alumni projections about the Association. This is evident in their evaluation of insights from this thesis and consistent with Belk's conceptualization of the extended self, suggesting that consumer theorists can make judgments about consumer motives that contradict consumer narratives²¹. Furthermore, brand community theories illustrate utopian consumer cultures where consumers share similar values for the things they consume (Muniz and O' Guin 2001).

It is apparent in this later informant's narrative that she does not subscribe to the sports ethos which predominates much of the Beaverness model. Her projections give credence to a heterotopic (St. John 2001) understanding of community, rather than a utopian view offered by the concept of brand communities. In order to preserve the value of the brand community concept Association administrators pursue Belk's promise of consumer motives that are

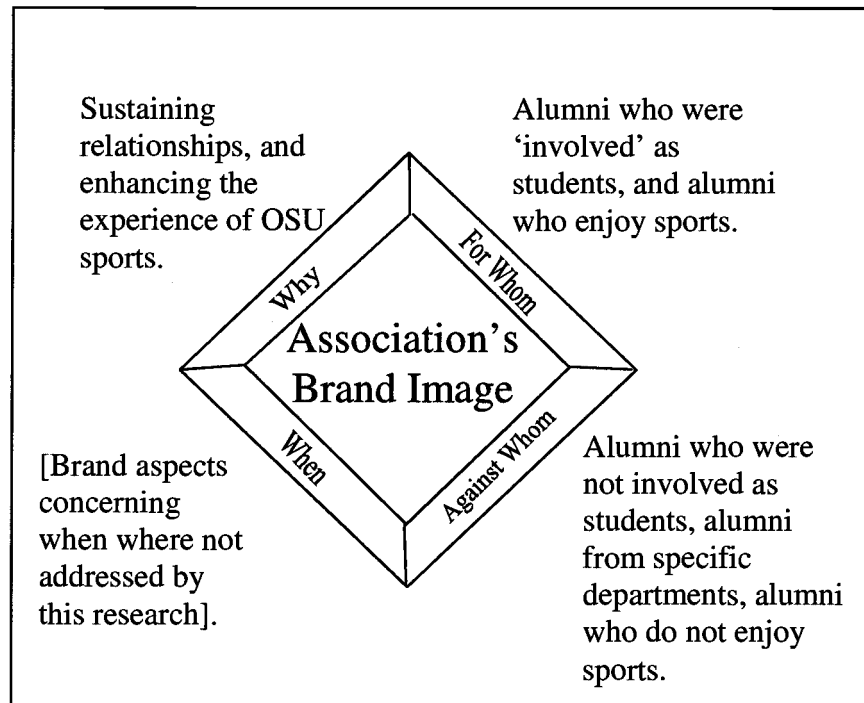
²¹ He does so much by stating "knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard possessions as parts of ourselves" (Belk 1988: 139).

‘unknown’ or ‘unintentional’ to the informant. Therefore, whereas the results from this thesis produce emic insights complicit with informant projections about their world; use of marketing theories by Association administrators has helped them to conceptualize the way alumni work in marketing models rather than appreciate how the Association can work in the lives and worlds of alumni.

Brand Image

The brand image that many of the informants have of the Association is rather similar between segments. The reasons they give for joining the Association are sustaining relationships and enjoying OSU athletics. Referring to Kapeferer’s (1992) brand positioning model (specifying who a brand is ‘for,’ ‘against,’ and ‘why it needs to exist’ see page of this document) the informants tend to describe the association as appropriate for alumni who were ‘involved’ as students, and alumni who enjoy sports. Their description of ‘who the Association is against’ is quite different than the Association’s concept of its brand, which suggests the Association brand is against University of Oregon alumni. Informants demonstrated that the Association brand is against alumni who were not involved as students, alumni from specific departments, alumni who do not enjoy sports. The differences between the Association’s concept of its brand (see diagram on page 32) and the informants’ interpretation of the Association brand (see diagram below) is made apparent by comparing the brand positioning diamonds between the two.

Diagram 6: Association's Brand Image



CHAPTER SIX-CONCLUSION

This thesis challenges the prevailing concept describing marketing as the act of consumer needs fulfillment. This research questions the behavioral paradigms of brand loyalty and offers a description of consumption being symbolic activity (Susan Fournier 1998, Prus 1987a, 1987b). By viewing consumption as a ritual act the meanings assigned to objects of consumption are understood to be part of an ongoing dialogue about the recreation of society and ones place in it.

I approached this study of consumption pursuant to Douglas and Isherwood's (1996) and du Gay et. al's (1997) systematic approach to cultural analysis. This model was applied in this thesis to describe marketing as a cultural process where consumers are socially embedded in the construction of meaning (Prus 1996). This approach is a fundamental departure from conventional marketing and consumer research which is concerned with the meanings consumers have for things (Folkman et. al, 2004). Instead, this cultural approach to meaning is concerned with how people use things to realize meaning in their lives, how "ritual performances are required to activate object meanings pertinent to social life" (Cursai et. al: 239).

As has been demonstrated by consumer research, much of that which is important in consumption relates to the formalization of the consumer's self through possession (Belk 1988). By merging this understanding with a concept of the consumer as a cultural being the ontologically important insight emerges that it is because consumers are 'beings-in-their-world' (Heidegger 1962,

Merleau-Ponty 2002) that possessions have meaning, not the other way around. Douglas and Isherwood (1996) explain that consumption of things is 'good think' (Levi-Strauss 1963) about one's possible self. Rosenberger's (1996, 2001) concept of the centrifugal self further describes how consumption is a ritual act symbolically linking the self in a dialogue about the maintenance or changes of society (Douglas and Calvez 1990). This approach to embodying consumers in cultural and social streams of action demonstrates the value in approaching consumer understandings from an emic or ethnographic viewpoint.

The emic insights of this research demonstrate the disparity between alumni's perception of the Association's brand image and its own concept of its brand. Whereas Association marketers presume their brand is for graduates of OSU and against graduates from other universities, this research demonstrates that alumni have their own way of determining who the Association is for and against (Kapferer 1992). Alumni forward many student experiences into the present as they formulate their interpretations of who the Association is for. These findings are consistent with Mulugeta et al. (1999) and McAlexander and Koenig's (2001) findings demonstrating that student experiences are continued into the alumni present and help shape alumni behaviors toward their university.

Susan Fournier (1998) proved that brand relationships emerge from the differing ways that consumers anthropomorphize brands or assign to them unique aspects of personality. Pearson (1999b) observed something similar to this scenario when he learned that alumni who donate to Stanford tend to have stronger beliefs that some unique aspect of the Stanford experience was

responsible for their successful student experience, rather than just the alum's personal efforts as a student. Those informants in the enfranchised segment have many experiences they may use to characterize OSU in a positive persona. Many of these informants characterize beliefs about OSU synonymous with 'friendliness,' 'easygoing,' 'casualness,' and 'comfortable.' These beliefs follow from participation in unique university experiences and contexts related to family involvement in the OSU tradition, participation in the Greek system, and involvement in student activities.

However, for many in the disenfranchised segment their relationship to OSU suffers from mismanagement. One informant describes OSU's character as being self centered because it 'does not care about students.' She predicates her beliefs on her perception that university administrators overly invest university resources into the athletics and engineering department. Another informant relates that OSU's personality is duplicitous as instructors encourage students to believe they will receive a career in their field, yet she believes the university and her department do little to secure these careers for graduates.

The functioning of the Association is shaped by a need to fulfill the wants and expectations of its community of consumers. Furthermore, the Association is challenged with the task of embodying its brand community within some context to society (Muniz and O'Guin 2001). The ability of the Association, then, to effect its marketing process in a meaningful way requires an understanding of how their alumni use the Association's brand as a social symbol between their selves and society. There is a tendency for Association administrators to believe

that their activity is to secure a utopian space where alumni practice Beaver rituals of consumption and reinforce the communal boundary that University of Oregon alumni cannot participate in this community. However, the emic insights of this research suggest that the way the alumni community is established also serves to internally differentiate alumni of OSU. Thereby, consumption of the Association becomes a symbolic boundary specifying who the Association is for (Kapferer 1992). This projection of the ideal alum concerns one who is socially involved, and a committed university athletics fan.

The way the Association conceives of the symbolic values for its brand is largely shaped by a commitment to the Beaverness model. This model, though tenuously practical, may not be flexible enough to appeal to differing alumni projections concerning what OSU should be like. The Beaverness model seems to privilege a sports ethos over other campus value systems. By adopting a utopian perspective of the campus society complicit with this sports ethos the Association is made to feel comfortable with an ideal concept of alumni and their life worlds. Unfortunately, this utopian rationalization is a convenient interpretation of the campus community which lacks the same variety as the symbols alumni use in maintaining their relationship with OSU.

The Beaverness model errs by rationalizing the alum/university relationship in terms of 'loyalty to OSU.' The segmentation of alumni into the categories of enfranchised, disenfranchised, and foreign segments serves as a more refined way for strategic management of these relationships. This is so because needs are culturally manifest (Douglas and Calvez 1990, du Gay et. al

1997). Logically, then, the consumer relationship begins with the symbolic resolution of life themes (Fournier 1998) or structural oppositions (Maranda and Maranda 1971) through some consumption ritual, from which the consumer formulates attitudes toward the brand, and later develops a pattern of 'brand-loyalty.'

By beginning and ending the discovery of the consumer relationship with the behavioral component of brand-loyalty the entire basis for the relationship is missed. The best way for the Association to repair its relationship with alumni in the disenfranchised and foreign segment is to understand how Association membership can be used in their life-worlds to help them symbolically recreate their projections of self and society. Symbolic interpretation of the Association by alumni is the critical basis of the alum/Association relationship. This was poignantly demonstrated by one informant who is an alum categorized into the disenfranchised segment. He has very little specific knowledge of what the Association does. However, he is clear about what the Association must be like in order to be integrated into his life world. Pointing to self dependent values contextualized by his engineering profession and experiences in the military he proclaims that the Association should not 'depend' on public funds. Similarly, he believes that the Association is for those alumni who could afford to socialize and pursue other leisure activities as students at OSU. In other words, his non-possession of an Association membership is a symbolic mediation helping him to see himself as opposed to alumni who 'wasted' their student experience at OSU.

Furthermore, his symbolic mediation helps him recreate his definition of what the role of being an engineer ought to be like. Given Rosenberger's concept of the centrifugal self (1996, 2001) it becomes apparent that consumption of things is a symbolic process relating self and others in the same cultural role to society. This insight has utility in understanding enfranchised informants construction of being an 'involved' alum. This centrifugal connection is important because enfranchised alumni are able to view their consumption of the Association membership as that ritual unifying them with other involved alumni.

Insights from this thesis give rise to the appropriate 'strategic vision' for marketing that Sherry (1989: 555) suggests should be created between anthropology and marketing. This thesis suggests there ought to be significant anthropological understandings in place before organizations pursue consumer insights related to the extended self (Belk 1988). Consumer researchers ought to first understand how consumer myths symbolically structure consumer's projections about society. These projections are integral to understanding how the ritual of consumption links consumers to their worlds. Following these understandings research can better explain how consumers' being is established by bonding with products.

This thesis demonstrates the practical differences stemming from marketing and anthropological theory. These differences follow from the differing ways that paradigmatic perspectives construct views of the 'self.' This concept of self necessarily has much bearing on the understood relationship between consumer and things. Belk's ontology suggests that people's existence

is dependent upon possessions, and therefore, the meaning for things can only be rationalized in relationship to possession. This approach to understanding meaning is similar to prevailing concepts of brand loyalty: Patterns of behavior, purchasing or possessing, are the basis for all relevant consumer understandings.

The cultural analysis of consumption presented in this thesis contradicts the above marketing theory perspectives of consumption. Findings in this research suggest that things are meaningful to consumers because people exist in their own subjective worlds. The meaning for things is understood as having symbolic meaning in these worlds: Things are relevant because people live in worlds where the ritual of consumption is used to symbolically sustain their ongoing construction of self and society.

I believe there is much hope for a meta-theoretical dialogue between the interests of marketing, both academic and applied, and the discipline and practice of anthropology. Marketers are quickly becoming interested in anthropological insights. Those companies who can better capitalize from anthropological research will naturally out compete other companies relying on outdated ways of thinking about consumers and consumption. However, directions and motives in anthropology tend to limit the discipline to those topics related to the critique of capitalism and those companies benefiting from the system. This thesis adds to the discipline of anthropology by demonstrating theoretical and methodological applications of anthropology for marketing interests. This thesis and other applied anthropological research will find the audience that wants it. This I believe will constitute a strong and growing niche in marketing research.

Reactions to this research by Association administrators demonstrate how anthropological theory could be vital to more effective consumer understandings. They chose to first explain the meaning for alumni behaviors by trying to understand the degree to which alumni's extended self is bonded with university logo items. This is unfortunate because they cannot 'dig deeper' and understand the underlying symbols structuring the alum/university and alum/Association relationship. The foundational insights they should have concerned themselves with first are the cultural projections alumni have for what OSU and the Association should be, and how they can build heterotopic alumni communities mediating these projections. Instead, the Association is left with the circular explanation that alumni whose extended self is bonded with OSU products are loyal alumni, and loyal alumni are those bonded to OSU products.

The Associations reaction to these results is likely shaped by other organizational factors which will tend to favor the concept of brand loyalty. Strategic management of the Association is largely constrained by its staffing protocols. Dialogue about the programs and services offered by the Association tend to be narrowly tied to specific administrators in the organization. This occurs because each program or service offered by the Association is managed by a director. Therefore, any conversation about 'what' the Association should be invariably is construed to mean 'who's program should be cut or augmented.' Particular Association programs and services are not challenged by changing the question from 'what should the Association be like,' to 'how can the Association create more loyal alumni.' Ironically, I believe anthropological research

concerning corporate culture could be employed in this and other organizations to find ways to make them more strategically minded and open to change consistent with consumer insights.

This type of flexibility is vital to the success of the alumni industry as a whole. The model of alumni associations offering reunions, alumni publications, picnics, and events at university athletics began at Harvard University over 175 years ago. As modern lifestyles change and the experience and contextualization of higher educations changes so should the role of alumni associations in alumni's lives. The effectiveness of alumni associations to adapt to these changes will largely depend on their organizational flexibility and willingness to attend to research insights about the lives and perceptions of alumni.

CHAPTER SEVEN-LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Limitations

Scope of Inference

This research is limited to a narrowly defined sample population of recent university graduates and current university senior class students. It is likely that alumni's self concepts and beliefs about their world change dramatically following this narrowly defined interval in life proximal to graduation. Only three of the informants had children and about half had never been married. It is likely that marriage and family are as significant an influence, if not much more, on the maturation and orientations of one's life.

Validity and Research Procedures

The procedures used for this research yielded many more insights than prior focus groups held with alumni concerning their perception of the Association. However, this procedure, as well as focus group methods, involves an artificial research setting.

Suggestions for Future Research

Broader Observation

Similar qualitative research projects could be performed involving alumni from several generations. These findings could be integrated to understand lifestyle transitions that occur throughout alumni's life-cycle.

A survey of alumni perceptions could be performed using quasi-qualitative techniques by employing the triangle method (D' Andrade 1995) to understand alumni's construction (Kelly 1955) of the alum/university relationship. These research projects would combine to form a broader understanding of how the alumni population views the Association.

Ethnographic Documentation

Ethnographers could be used to interview key university informants who interact with alumni frequently. The data could be compared and analyzed for consistent themes. Alumni could then be interviewed concerning the types of interactions they have with OSU and these could be compared to prior interviews. Insights from this research would better inform the Association how alumni are interacting with OSU, with whom, and for what reasons.

CHAPTER EIGHT-RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations are market management guidelines meant to generate new practices for the administration of Association brand, activities, and products.

Enfranchise alumni rather than make them loyal or disloyal: Alumni who participate in Association functions are not more loyal to OSU. They are enfranchised with the Association. This means that in some way these alumni derive personal and social satisfaction from participating in the Association.

- *Get involved with the student experience.* Active alumni tend to view their student experiences as fun and socially involved. Several alumni associations are now contributing to students' involvement by offering student events. These events are generally appealing to all students, and include, concerts on campus, campus barbeques, and the alike.
- *Socialize students to see themselves as future alumni.* Modern techniques of social marketing try to create social conditions which give rise to positive behavior. Active alumni tend to have parents and family who shaped their attitudes toward participating in the Association. One association has assumed the responsibility of generating family involvement by renaming their building the 'Student, Parent, and Alumni Association of....'
- *Addresss concerns they have of the Association.* Plan for change and be willing to reinvent alumni programs and advertising to attract less active alumni.

Participants illustrated negative attitudes toward the Association's investment in university sports and social events.

Manage the Association's brand image. Many informants demonstrated perceptions of the Association that vary greatly from the Association's desired brand identity. These perceptions include a belief that the Association is involved in fundraising, is too invested in sports, is for socially involved graduates, and to a lesser degree, counter-productive to an ethos of education. Many of these interpretations follow from beliefs about what alumni are like.

- *Consider revising the brand name of the Association.* Since the word alumni has many interpretations contradictory to the modern alumni association several Associations have removed the word 'alumni' from their name. One association is named 'The Association of Former Students of' I held a pilot focus group with OSU students where they determined that the words alumni association implies a place for social elites or old men who like sports; being a Beaver Believer implies one who regularly attends sports; and being an Oregon Stater is anyone who has attended OSU.
- *Develop low social context events.* Though social activities are important to active alumni, others feel alienated by these events. Research indicates that following graduation there is much importance placed on working on one's home. An event of low social context may be a forum for home redesign and remodeling techniques.

- *Demonstrate how the Association contributes to education.* Formulate marketing strategies to inform alumni about the various opportunities to get involved with the support of education at OSU through the Association.

Manage the corporate culture to be flexible to alumni perceptions and lifestyles. The theoretical paradigms that the Association has chosen to explain the motives of alumni shape the ability of the organization to learn about alumni. This paradigm presumes to know the ideal alum and alumni community are like.

- *There are no ideal alumni.* The Association's idealized concept of alumni is largely framed by themes of fanatical commitment to OSU athletics. It is likely that this is a picture of the behaviors they most often see alumni engaging in, however, the alumni relationship to OSU transcends the athletic context.
- *Embrace diversity.* The Beaverness model seemingly offers a utopian view of what the alumni community ought to be like. By finding ways to broaden the definition of alumni community the community may conceivably broaden the number of alumni interested in participating.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Astin, A. W. (1993), *What Matters in College?*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Appadurai, Arjun (1996) Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value, in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, originally published in 1986, edited by Appadurai, Arjun, Cambridge Press, Great Brittan.

Applbaum, Kalman (1998), The Sweetness of Salvation: Consumer Marketing and the Liberal-Bourgeois Theory of Needs, in *Current Anthropology*, June, Vol. 39, No. 3, 323-350.

Baade, Robert A., and Jeffery O. Sundberg (1996), Fourth Down and Gold to Go? Assessing the link between Athletics and Alumni Giving, *Social Science Quarterly*, Vol. 77, No. 4, 789-803.

Bagozzi, Richard P. (2000), On the Concept of Intentional Social Action in Consumer Behavior, in *the Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 27, December, 388-396.

Bankston III, Carl L., and Min Zhou (2002), Social Capital as Process: The Meaning and Problems of a Theoretical Metaphor, in *Sociological Inquiry*, Vol. 72, No. 2, pg. 285-317.

Baudrillard, Jean (1988), *Selected Writings*, edited by Mark Poster, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California.

Bayton, James A. (1958), Motivation, Cognition, Learning—Basic Factors in Consumer Behavior, in the *Journal of Marketing*, January, Vol. 22, Issue 3, 282-290.

Belk, Russel W. (1988), Possession and the Extended Self, in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, September, Vol. 15, pg. 139-160.

— (1991), *Highways and Buyways: Naturalistic Research from the Consumer Behavior Odeyssey*, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.

—, Melanie Wallendorf, and John F. Sherry Jr. (1989), The Sacred and the Profane in Consumer Behavior: Theodicy on the Odeyssey, in *The Journal of Consumer Research*, June, Vol. 16, 1-38.

Bergson, Henri (1921), *Time and Free Will: An Essay on The Immediate Data of Consciousness*, 4th edition, The Macmillian Company, New York.

Bhattacharya, C.B., Hayagreeva Rao, and Mary Ann Glynn (1995), Understanding the Bond of Identification: An Investigation of its Correlates

Among Art Museum Members, in the *Journal of Marketing*, October, Vol. 59, pg. 46-57.

Biddle, Bruce J., Barbara J. Bank, and Ricky L. Slavings. (1990), Modality of Thought, Campus Experiences and the Development of Values, in *the Journal of Education Psychology*, Vol. 82, No. 4, 671-682.

Bourdieu, Pierre (1990), *The Logic of Practice*, Polity Press, Cambridge Massachusetts.

— (1984), *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Buften, Serena (2003), The Lifeworld of the University Student: Habitus and Social Class, in the *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, Fall, Vol. 34, Issue 2, pg. 207-235.

Castle, Emery N. (2002), Social Capital: An Interdisciplinary Concept, in *Rural Sociology*, Vol. 67, No. 3, pg. 331-349.

Collier, John Jr. (1967), *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York.

Collins, Joseph S., and Diana Tilley Strange (1999), The Data that Drive MIT's Success: Fund Raising from Alumni, in *Research in Alumni Relations: Surveying Alumni to Improve Your Programs*, edited by Shoemaker, Donna, Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Washington, DC, 63-74.

Collins, Joseph S., William J. Hecht, and Diana Tilley Strange (1999), Planning and Evaluating Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Alumni Services and Fundraising, in *Directions for Institutional Research*, special issue A New Era of Alumni Research: Improving Institutional Performance and Better Serving Alumni, edited by Pettit, Joseph, and Larry H. Litten, Spring, No. 101.

Coleman, James S. (1988), Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital, in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 94, Supplement: Organizations and Institutions: Sociological and Economic Approaches to the Analysis of social Structure.

Cone, Randy E., (1980), A Survey of University of New Orleans Associate of Science Degree Recipients from December, 1975 Through August, 1978, Division of Business and Economic Research College of Business Administration.

Connolly, M. S., and R. Blanchette, (1986), Understanding and Predicting Alumni Giving Behavior, in *Directions for Institutional Research*, special issue Enhancing the Management of Fund Raising, No. 51.

Cox, Sheralyn C., (1988), A Longitudinal Study of Values in Preferences Changes as an Index of Adult Development in Brea College Students and Alumni, in *Education Document Reproduction Services*, April, ED 299 863, 1-40.

Csikszentmihalyi Mihaly (1990), *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, Harper Perennial.

D'Andreade, Roy, (1995), *The Development of Cognitive Anthropology*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Douglas, Mary and Calvez, Marcel (1990), The Self as Risk Taker: a Cultural Theory of Contagion in Relation to AIDS, in *Sociological Review*, Aug, Vol. 38 Issue 3, p445, 20p

Douglas, Mary and Baron Isherwood (1996, originally 1979) *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*, Routledge, London, Great Britain.

Du Gay, Paul, Stuart Hall, Linda Janes, Hugh Machay, and Keith Negus (1997), *Doing Cultural Studies: The Story of the Sony Walkman*, Sage Publications, London.

Durkheim, Emile and Mauss, Marcel (1963), *Primitive Classification*, originally published in 1903, translated by Rodney Needham, The University of Chicago Press.

Folkman Curasi, Arnould Eric J. Carolyn, and Linda L. Price (2004), Ritual Desire and Ritual Development: An Examination of Family Heirlooms in Contemporary North American Households, in *Contemporary Consumption Rituals: A Research Anthology*, edited by Otnes, Cele C. and Lowrey, Tina M., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, London.

Floch, Jean-Marie (2001), *Semiotics, Marketing and Communication*, translated by Robin Orr Bodkin, Antony Rowe Ltd., Chippenham, Wiltshire, Great Britain.

Foster, George (1969), *Applied Anthropology*, Little, Brown and Company, Boston.

Fournier, Susan (1998), Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research, in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, March, Vol. 24, pg. 343-370.

Fournier, Valerie, and Payne, Roy (1994), Change in Self Construction During Transition from University to Employment: A Personal Construct Psychology Approach, in the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, vol. 67, pg. 297-314.

Foxall, G. R. (1994), *Consumer Psychology for Marketing*, Routledge, New York.

Garfinkel, Harold (1967), *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

Goffman, Erving (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Doubleday Anchor Books, Garden City, New York.

— (1963), *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J.

Griffin, Abbie, and Hauser John (1993), The Voice of the Customer, in *Marketing Science*, Winter, Vol. 12, Issue 1, 1-27.

Heidegger, Martin (1962), *Being and Time*, SCM Press, London.

Heider, Karl G. (1976), *Ethnographic Film*, University of Texas Press, Austin, Texas.

Heisley, Deborah D., and Sidney J Levy (1991), Autodriving: A Photoelicitation Technique, in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, December, Vol. 18, 257-272.

Holt, Douglas B., (1998), Does Cultural Capital Structure American Consumption?, in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, June, Vol. 25.

Ian Hodder (1991), *Reading the Past*, Cambridge University Press, New York.

Kapferer, Jean-Noel, (1992), *Strategic Brand Management: New Approaches to Creating and Evaluating Brand Equity*, The Free Press, New York.

Kazem, Mohamed I. (1980), Development of University Students' Values in Ten Years: A Follow Up Study, in *Education Document Reproduction Services*, ED 263 805, 1-13.

Keller, Kevin Lane (1993), Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity, in the *Journal of Marketing*, January, Vol. 57, pg. 1-22.

Keller, Kevin Lane (2001), Building Customer-Based Brand Equity, in *Marketing Management*, July/August, pg. 15-19.

Kelly, George A. (1955), *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, W. W. Norton, New York.

Kissling, Elizabeth Areeda (1996), That's Just a Basic Teen-Age Rule: Girl's Linguistic Strategies for Managing the Menstrual Communication Taboo, in the *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, volume 24, pg. 292-309.

Kopytoff, Igor (1996) The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process, in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, edited by Appadurai, Arjun, Cambridge Press, Great Britan.

Kozinets, Robert V., (2001), Utopian Enterprise: Articulating the Meanings of Star Trek's Culture of Consumption, in *the Journal of Consumer Research*, June, Vol. 28.

Levi-Strauss, Claude (1963), *Totemism*, translated by Rodney Needham, Beacon Press, Boston.

— (1966), *The Savage Mind*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill.

— (1973), *From Honey to Ashes: Introduction to the Science of Mythology*, Vol. 2, Harper and Row Publishers, New York.

— (1975), *The Raw and the Cooked: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*, Vol. 1. Harper and Row Publishers, New York.

Manning, H. Paul (2001), On Social Deixis, in *Anthropological Linguistics*, volume 43, issue 1, pg. 54-100.

Maranda Piere, and Maranda, Elli Kongas, editors (1971), *Structural Analysis of Oral Traditions*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Marcia, Kassner, (1990) *Career Attributions and Attribution Dimensions as Classifications of Occupational Types: An Extension Utilizing University of North Dakota Alumni*, Bureau of Business and Economic Research University of North Dakota, Grand Forks, North Dakota.

McAlexander, James H., and Harold F Koenig (2001), University Experiences, the Student-College Relationship, and Alumni Support, *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, Vol. 10(3), p. 21-43.

McGuire, Michael D., and Jason P., Casey (1999), Using Comparative Alumni Data for Polity Analysis and Institutional Assessment, in *Directions for Institutional Research*, special issue *A New Era of Alumni Research: Improving*

Institutional Performance and Better Serving Alumni, edited by Pettit, Joseph, and Litten, Larry H., Spring, No. 101.

Mead, George Herbert (1934), *Mind Self and Society From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, edited by Charles W. Morris, Chicago, Ill., the university of Chicago Press.

Mead, Margaret (1980) *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, originally published in 1935, New York. Morrow Quill Paperbacks.

Melchiori, Gerlinda S. (1988), Alumni Research: An Introduction, in *Alumni Research: Methods and Applications*, edited by Melchiori, Gerlinda S., Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, San Francisco.

Miller, Daniel (2001), *The Dialectics of Shopping*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill.

Merleau-Ponty, M. (2002), *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, London, first published in 1945.

Mulugetta Yuko, Scott Nash, and Susan H. Murphy (1999), What Makes a Difference: Evaluating the Cornell Tradition Program, in *Directions for Institutional Research, special issue A New Era of Alumni Research: Improving Institutional Performance and Better Serving Alumni*, edited by Pettit, Joseph, and Litten, Larry H., Spring, No. 101.

Muniz, Albert M. , Jr., and Thomas C. O'Guinn (2001), Brand Community, in *the Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 27, March 2001, 412-432.

Newman, Lary M., and Ira J. Dolich (1979), An Examination of Ego-involvement as a Modifier of Attitude Changes Caused from Product Testing, Vol. 6, Issue 1, 180-4.

Ochs, Elinor, and Capps, Lisa (1996), Narrating the Self, in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 25, pg. 19-43.

Pearson, Jerold (1999a), Targeted Research Gets Results: Comprehensive Research on Alumni Relationships: Four Years of Market Research at Stanford University, in *Research in Alumni Relations: Surveying Alumni to Improve Your Programs*, edited by Shoemaker, Donna, Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Washington, DC, 1-11.

Pearson, Jerold (1999b), Comprehensive Research on Alumni Relationships: Four Years of Market Research at Stanford University, in *Directions for Institutional Research, special issue A New Era of Alumni Research: Improving*

Institutional Performance and Better Serving Alumni, edited by Pettit, Joseph, and Litten, Larry H., Spring, No. 101.

Putnam, Robert D. (1995), *Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital*, in *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pg. 65-78.

Prus, Robert C. (1987a), *Marketplace Dynamics: The P's of People and Process*, in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 61-65.

— (1987b) *Generic Social Processes: implications of a Personal Theory of Action for Research on Marketplace Exchanges*, in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, Issue 1, 66-70.

— (1996), *Symbolic Interaction and Ethnographic Research: Intersubjectivity and the Study of Human Lived Experience*, State University of New York Press, Albany New York.

Regan, Mary C., and Roland, Helen Elizabeth (1982), *University Students: A Change in Expectations and Aspirations Over the Decade*, in *Sociology of Education*, October, Vol. 55, 223-228.

Rosenberger, Nancy (1989), *Dialectic Balance in the Polar Model of Self: The Japan Case*, in *Ethos*, Vol. 17, No. 1, pg. 88-13.

— (1996), *Fragile Resistances, Signs of Status: Women Between State and Media in Japan*, in *Re-imaging Japanese Women*, edited by A. Imamura, pg. 12-45, University of California Press, Berkeley.

— (2001), *Gambling with Virtue: Japanese Woman and the Search for Self in a Changing Nation*, University of Hawai'i Press, Honolulu.

Saussure, Ferdinand de (1986), *Course in General Linguistics*, in *Critical Theory Since 1965*, edited by Adams, Hazard and Searle, Leroy, Florida State University Press, Tallahassee.

— (1996), *Saussure's First Course of Lectures on General Linguistics from the Notebooks of Albert Riedlinger*, edited by Eisuke Komatsu and translated by George Wolf, Pergamon, New York.

Schultz, Alfred (1932), *The Phenomenology of the Social World*, Heinemann Educational Books, London.

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

Sherry, John F. Jr., (1989), Observations on Marketing and Consumption: An Anthropological Note, in *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol. 16, p. 555-561.

— (2000), Place, Technology, and Representation, in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, September, Vol. 27.

— , and Kozinets, Robert V. (2004) Sacred Iconography in Secular Space: Altars, Alters, and Alterity at the Burning Man Project, in *Contemporary Consumption Rituals: A Research Anthology*, editors Otnes, Cele C. and Lowrey, Tina M., Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, London.

Sokefeld, Martin (1999), Debating Self, Identity, and Culture in Anthropology, in *Current Anthropology*, August-October, Vol. 40, No. 4, pg. 417-447.

St. John, Graham (2001), Alternative Cutltural Heterotopia and the Liminoid Body: Beyond turner at ConFest, in *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 12:1, 47-66.

Tan Tsu Wee, Thomas, and Matthew Chua Han Ming (2003), The Leveraging on Symbolic Values and Meanings in Branding, in *Brand Management*, Vol. 10, No. 3, pg. 208-218.

Turner, Victor (1957), *Schism and Continuity in African Society: A Study of Ndembu Village Life*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.

— (1967), *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Rituals*, Cornell University Press, Ithica, New York.

Volkwein, J. Fredericks, and Kelli Parmley, (1999), Testing Why Alumni Give: A Model of Alumni Gift-Giving Behavior, in *Research in Alumni Relations: Surveying Alumni to Improve Your Programs*, edited by Shoemaker, Donna, Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, Washington, DC, 59-62.

Weiser, Judy (2001), Phototherapy Techniques: Using Clients' Personal Snapshots and Family Photos as Counseling and Therapy Tools, in *Afterimage*, November, 1.

Well, William (1993), Discovery Oriented Consumer Research, in *the Journal of Consumer Research*, March, Vol. 19, 489-504.

Woolcock, M. (1997), Social Capital and Economic Development, in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 27, pg. 151-208.

Ziems, Dirk (2004), The Morphological Approach for Unconscious Consumer Motivation Research, in the *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 44, Issue 2, p.210-16.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Photo Documentation Assignments

1. For this assignment, imagine you've agreed to mentor a girl or boy from a local scout troop. The scout leader asks that you show an item to the scout representing an organization, institution, or business you are proud to have participated in. Take a photograph of that item.
2. Pretend a historian visits you from the local museum whose research topic is "Things of sentimental value." He asks if you'd let him photograph an item of sentimental value to you. You excitedly hurry around the house and find this item. When you show it to him, he frowns as he fumbles around in his breast coat pocket. "I've forgotten my glasses," he exclaims. He hands you a disposable camera and asks you to take a photo of the item, since he can't see through the camera's viewfinder without his glasses.
3. Photograph something you'd like to invest more time and effort in. This might be anything from a project, activity, hobby or something else.
4. For these next three assignments pretend a biographer from the *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous* or a journalist from the local newspaper has been assigned to document *you* by photographing things you own.
 - a. For this first picture pretend you are the biographer and you've never met yourself before. You are a stranger--the biographer, in your own home. Photograph one or two things you believe the general public would find interesting or unique.
 - b. Now, pretend the biographer has asked you to show her an item you believe best represents your character or personality. She hands you the camera and asks you to photograph this item.

- c. Before she leaves she asks to drive downtown with you to see what your life is like “on-the-go.” The both of you either take your car or the bus. What item of yours do you believe the both of you talk about the longest (for example: your car, bumper sticker, clothes, key chain, etc.) Take a photograph of this item.
- 5. Think about a goal you’d like to achieve in the next 5 years. Photograph something you have, or will have, that will be necessary to achieve that goal.
- 6. Please photograph an item that has special meaning to you because a close friend or peer gave it to you.
- 7. Take a moment to reflect upon your experience at OSU. Photograph something representing your overall opinion of your experience at OSU. Some people find it easier to first think about a color representing their feelings and opinions. They then look for something predominately of that color, which possesses other aspects similar to their opinions.
- 8. Think about a particular habit, skill or experience you gained while at OSU that has helped shape your life currently. Take a photograph of something that most closely represents that habit, skill or experience.

Appendix B: Structural Analysis Matrix

ID	Status	College	Segment	Se	Notes
A	Student	Engineering	Foreign	F	Junior College transfer from Albany Oregon.
B	Alum	Engineering	Foreign	M	Participated in OSU marching band, lives in Portland.
C	Student	Home Ec.	Foreign	F	Active member of the honor society.
D	Student	Business	Dis-enfranchised	F	Lived in a sorority and her family attended OSU.
E	Student	Computer Sc.	Foreign	M	J.C. transfer, divorced.
F	Student	Liberal Arts	Foreign	F	Married and has a son.
G	Alum	Engineering	Dis-enfranchised	M	Married. His wife now attends OSU.
H	Student	Liberal Arts	Dis-enfranchised	F	Non-traditional student.
I	Alum	Forestry	Dis-enfranchised	F	Married and lives in Southern Oregon.
J	Alum	Business	Enfranchised	M	Leader in the Greek system and student organization, family has attended OSU for 4 generations.
K	Alum	Business	Enfranchised	F	Lived in a sorority.
L	Alum	Healthcare Admin.	Enfranchised	F	Non-traditional student. Family attended OSU. Met husband at OSU.

Appendix C: Structural Analysis Matrix

F:R	A:R	I:L	D:V	O ²² :V	A:M	S:A	S:D	S:S'	S:V	A:V	OSU	AA	M
4-												1	Disfranchised Segment
	3-											1	
								4-				1	
					4-						1		
					3-						1		
					3-							1	
					2-						1		
				1-							1		
				2-							1		
									2+		1		
		4									1		Foreign Segment
4											1		
					1-							1	
						4-					1		
								4+			1		
								4+			1		
									1+		1		
							4				1		
							1+				1		
				1-								1	
				3							1	1	
				3+							1		
		3+										1	Enfranchised Segment
1+											1		
	1+											1	
	1+										1		
	x=y										1		
						1+						1	
								4+			1		
			1+								1		
										4+	1		

²² OSU is represented here as a structural domain.