

Connecting with “Connected Consumers”



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Connecting with Connected Consumers

- How do we think about the “connected customer”?
- What are customers connected to?
- Shifting research from individuals to relationships
- Shifting research from dyadic relationships between customers and firms to consumer centric ecosystems

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How do we think about the “Connected Customer”?



The “Connected Customer”



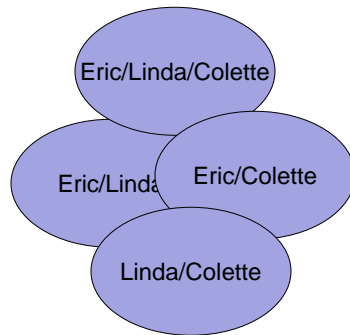
What Are Customers Connected To?

- Mostly it's not "What" but "Who"?
- Mostly it's not a lot of "Who" but a few "Who"
- These few "Who" create "we": families, best friends, siblings, spouses, co-authors ☺
- Brands, products & services are inserted into "the between" space as resources for enacting "we".
- Although there are individual voices in the "we" the motives, discourses, practices and temporal interplay that make up the "we" are distinct, collectively shaped, collectively enacted.

The "Connected Consumer"

- *Here would be a cultural shift of Copernican magnitude—from presuming a self at the center of the social world to seeing relationships as the enduring reality of which the self is an integral part.*
Kenneth J. Gergen (1996, p. 135)
- *Others enter our world and our everyday lives not as instruments by which we achieve our own personal satisfactions but rather as partners in a shared enterprise without which we could never hope to be who we are.*
Edward E. Sampson (2000, p. 1431)

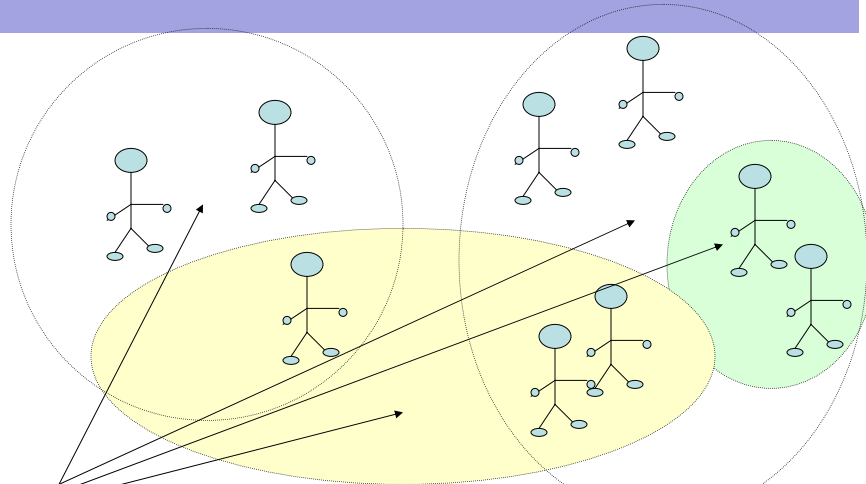
From Individuals to Relationships



*From work with Amber Epp,
Doctoral candidate, University of Nebraska

- It's actually more complicated than this
- Each one of these relational units has goals, preferences, rituals and discourses (stories, memories, knowledge, interactions)*
- This helps explain
 - why we regularly eat at places that none of us prefer.
 - Why certain brand & service loyalties are prominent when Linda is with Eric and different brand and service loyalties are prominent when Linda is with Colette.
 - Why brands and services are beloved because they support the collective we

The “Connected Consumer”



Brands and services are relational resources inserted into “the between”
to support, revise the “we”

Shifting Research from Individuals to Relationships

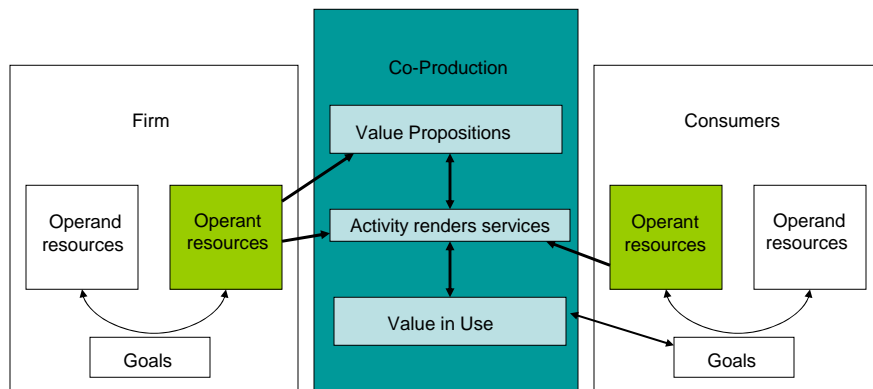
At present we possess a staggering vocabulary for characterizing individual selves but stand virtually mute in the discourse of relatedness. It is as if we have at our disposal an enormously elaborated language for describing rooks, pawns, and bishops but are unable to characterize the game of chess. Can we develop a language of understanding in which individual characteristics are derivatives of more essential forms of relationship? (Gergen, *Realities and Relationships*, p. 214).

Shifting Research from Individuals to Relationships

From

- individual memories to collective dynamic, relationally enacted and performed memories and narratives
- individual cognition to communal collaborative cognition
- individual attitudes to attitudes as a position within a relational conversation
- individual emotions to emotions as events within relational patterns
- Individual identity to enacted relational identities with distinctive goals, discourses and practices
- Brands, services and objects as extensions of the self to props and partners in the essential enterprise of relatedness.
- Service relationships as dyadic to nested within an ecosystem "the lifeworld of the consumer"

A “Dyadic Perspective”

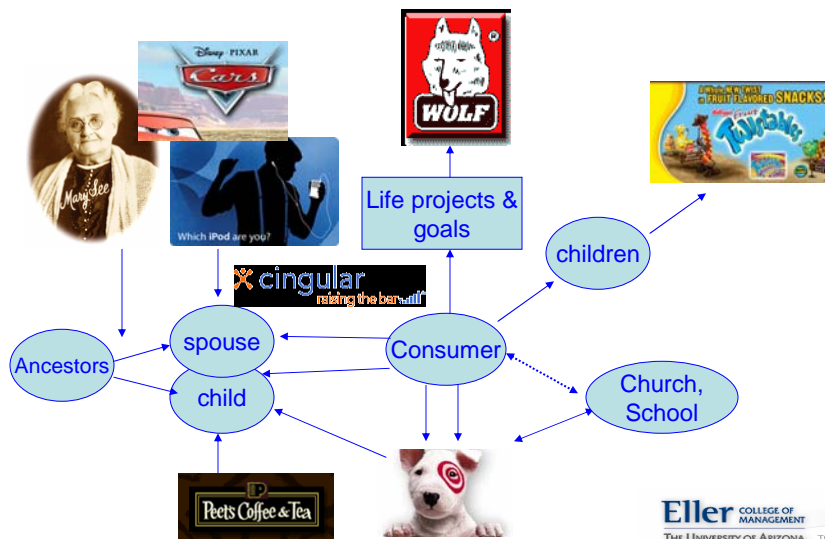


Source: Arnould, Price and Malshe 2006

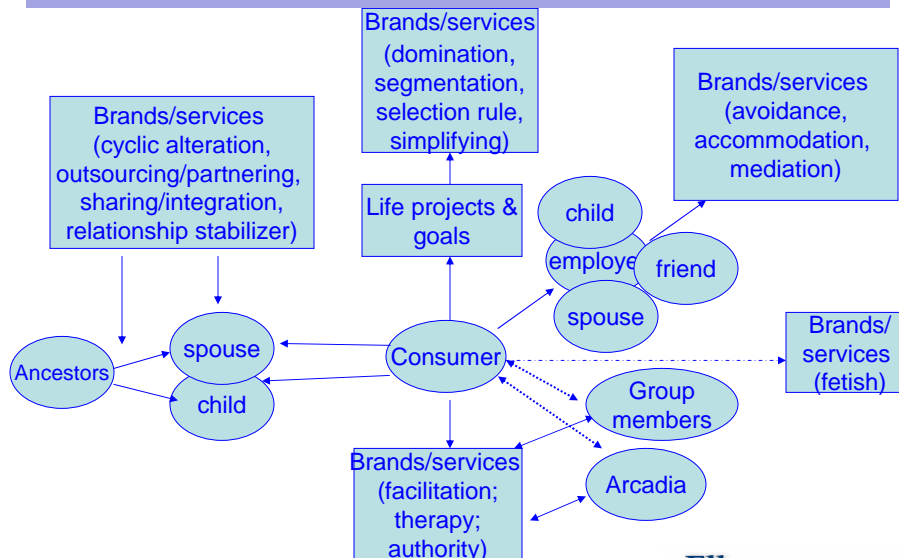
The “Ecosystem Metaphor”

- “People don’t just own or use individual devices, but ecosystems of technologies located on their bodies, at various work sites, and at home. Pagers, faxes, cell phones, telephone answering systems, and computers are used together to serve the goals of individuals and families. Individual relationships are mediated through these devices. ...The devices, like the stone axes, are tools for creating relationships. People use their devices to manage the complex rhythms of high-technology work by granting communications access to some, to gain information and deflect access from others, and to gain time.” p. 52, Cultures@Silicon Valley

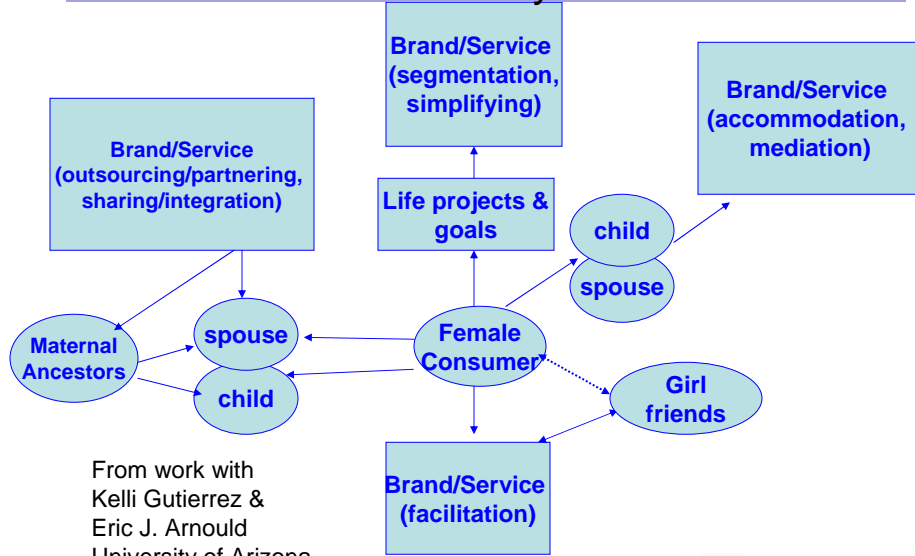
The "Ecosystem Metaphor"



Brands/Services as Relational Resources in Everyday Life



Concluding Illustration: Strategic Use of a Meal Assembly Service



From work with
Kelli Gutierrez &
Eric J. Arnould
University of Arizona

Questions and Comments

