Guardianship and Ownership on Nebraska Century Farms

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Century farm families are those that have held title to a farm for at least one hundred years. Depth interviews and participant observation with Nebraska Century farm families extends our understanding of the limits to fungibility of possessions imbued with relational symbolism within a kinship group. Our research exposes cultural tensions between ownership and guardianship as well as the way these tensions shape curatorial consumption. Engagement with, access to, and transfer of Century farms illustrate the interplay between ownership and guardianship across generations of farm families. Our paper calibrates a variety of curatorial tactics that illustrate how access and ownership are subordinated to guardianship. We develop contrasts between this cultural model of guardianship and a corporate model of management and ownership.

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Likewise, although Holt (2004) asserts that it is the cohesive myth that binds people to a community, we find that it is precisely what is left unwritten in the focal text that inspires fans to actively engage in co-creation and form fan communities. Lastly, although the co-creation literature views this process as between producers and consumers (or consumption communities), it does not really address how co-creation goes on between consumers. Members of these fan communities not only engage the focal text (i.e., meaning creation and interpretation), but also co-create texts with other consumers (i.e., meaning development). This process generates the "meta-text," which in turn provides consumers with more "cultural resources" to continue their creative endeavors.

"Guardianship and Access on Nebraska Century Farms"

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Nebraska "Century Farm" families have owned a farm or ranch for at least one hundred years. Perhaps paradoxically, our research with these families extends our understanding of a paradigm of object relationships highlighting access, where property is in some sense shared, and the agents involved have complex roles in constituting consumption objects imbued with relational symbolism within kinship groups (Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004; McGraw, Tetlock and Kristel 2003). Our research exposes cultural tensions agents experience between guardianship of something inalienable and loss through alienation, as well as the way these tensions shape their "curatorial" consumption (McCracken 1988). Access to and transfer of Century farms illustrate the interplay between alienability and inalienability across generations of farm families. Our paper exposes a variety of tactics for establishing and maintaining guardianship of the farm as site of production and consumption.

The Aksarben Foundation recognizes over 5000 Century Farms in Nebraska. Given the history of settlement, this often means a single family has held title to these farms since the original homesteading in the 1870s and 1880s, which was itself an access gaining process. In other words, Century farms have been transferred between four and six generations of farm family members. We conducted long interviews with over 30 families and participant observation with two of them to investigate contemporary management practices, curatorial consumption and family farm culture.

For individual agents, access to the farm precedes ownership and typically is mediated by kinship, that is, nuclear or extended family membership. It is enacted over time through expressions of interest that senior guardians recognize in more junior kinsfolk, and through their investment of productive labor in farming operations. Access may lead to increasing levels of agent's engagement or desire for ownership/guardianship. Engagement is effortful. It is expressed through obtaining educational qualifications. It is further expressed through farmers' commitment to what they term stewardship, care of the land and steps taken to improve it, such as sustainable management practices with a view to preserving access for future generations. In some cases, rescuing a failing family member's farm operation may entitle one to greater say in the eventual disposition of the heritage farm removed from risk. Heirs are not simply designated, but become heirs through long-term demonstration of effort, worth, and ability.

Guardianship entails lifestyle commitments involving trade-offs between investments in the farm and additional land (rent and purchase) and consumption attractions available to city dwellers such as vacations, nice clothing, and the like (Machum 2005). Those who enjoy current guardianship/ownership make choices to have access to the farm and the way of life it entails instead of something else (due to time, money, etc). A jack of all trades' ethos with regard to production, and an attitude disparaging of farmers who engage in conspicuous consumption of new agricultural equipment or materialistic lifestyles was common among Century farms owners/guardians.

In this context, access has preeminence over ownership. As a necessary precursor to guardianship/ownership, access flows naturally into guardianship. Absentee owners, i.e., those without day-to-day access, even cash renters are suspect, even resented. This may be because absenteeism and alienated relationships to the land threaten the access-guardianship pathway. Access to the farm induces positive identity claims and symbolism that are shared with younger family members. Through the length of time they're on their land, many Century farm families feel they have earned a type of distinction that resonates with the concept of 'patina' associated with inherited family possessions before the industrial revolution. Many informants seem to feel that Century Farm families have earned a level of distinction (good character, dependability, strong work ethic, faith, etc.) due in part to the longevity of their guardianship, and that these distinctions are lost when access is lost, but may be regained if access is renewed.

Guardians go to some lengths to preserve access for themselves and future generations (Coyne 2005). Developing niche markets and blending farm and off-farm income sources are tactics some employ (Edgcomb and Thetford 2004). A legacy of cautious innovation is common among these families. Nevertheless, market pressures lead some families to expand the scale of farmland and farm operations at the expense of other harder-pressed farm families. Guardians that are unable to actively farm the land due to financial reversals or advancing age may rent their farm to others family members preferentially but not necessarily, but resist the temptation to sell it out of the family. In these cases, they trade off their own access to the land against the responsibility to act as guardians for future generations. They express the hope that some family member will be able and willing to take over access and guardianship of the farm. Guardians also gift access of the farm to family members who have migrated to town or to other states, and encourage members of the migrants' families to return for the agricultural summer season or important family holidays. In this way, ownership is symbolically shared and future guardians are sometimes even recruited. Those who see an off-farm future ahead express regret and misgivings.

Century farm families engage in creative strategies to retain family farms within the family and across generations. Farm transfer practices are quite complex from family to family. Engagement is expressed in an array of everyday practices such as ongoing labor commitments in the absence of ownership guaranties. This behavior is characteristic of younger family members who may hope to assume guardianship of the farm at some future point. Living trusts, intergenerational gifting, intergenerational installment purchase, investments of labor and even capital investments by younger family members in the farm to which they do not have title, are among the tactics employed to transfer guardianship between generations of farm families. Older guardians may signal progressive transfers and their change in status by moving from the main house to a secondary home either built on the property or at its margin, or in some cases in nearby small towns. Overall, progressive intergenerational transfer of limited rights characterizes these practices.

We found many cases where the burden of guardianship (Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004) had become great; farming is just "no fun" anymore, and selling out appears to be the only option.

Still, many informants indicate that an important goal is to pass the farm forward into the future, and they desire at all costs to avoid being the one who "lost the farm." These behaviors resonate with those of the guardians of inalienable wealth in other contexts (Curasi, Price and Arnould 2004). In other words, curatorial behavior is a key factor distinguishing the behavioral models of family and corporate farming in the minds of our informants.

Today, working century farm families operate within a complex and highly competitive market economy that imposes a host of threats to the guardianship/ownership model (Hassebrook 1999; Salamon and Toratore 1994). But family farms persist, and Nebraska Century farmers recognize significant distinctions between the logic of family farm operations and those of corporate farms.

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SPECIAL SESSION SUMMARY

"Fakin' It": Why Do Consumers Buy Counterfeit Goods?

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SESSION OVERVIEW

Objective. Despite a booming multi-billion dollar global market for counterfeit goods, academic research on the consumption of such goods remains sparse. Who are the consumers of counterfeit goods? Why do they engage in such illegal consumption behaviors, even when they can afford the genuine goods? And how do others view those who engage in such questionable but, at the same time, often *de rigueur* actions? These are the questions that motivate this session, the objective of which is to further our understanding of this increasingly important but largely overlooked domain of consumption behavior.

Content. This session comprises four papers that together shed light on the individual and product-specific determinants, the motivational underpinnings, and the social and product-specific consequences of counterfeit good consumption. The papers are in advanced stages of completion, each containing empirical findings from one or more studies. The session's scope is both broad and deep: the papers draw on a diversity of theoretical and empirical perspectives to contribute towards an incipient but persuasive, coherent understanding of how the social environment interacts with individual motivations to influence the consumption of counterfeit goods.

The first two papers examine the nature and extent of social sanction for counterfeit consumption behavior. The Geiger-Oneto paper draws on social identity theory to implicate the counterfeit buyer's social distance as a determinant of others' reactions of such a person. While counterfeit buyers are in general evaluated less favorably than buyers of genuine brands, the former are evaluated more favorably when they are members of an in-group than of an out-group. The Chang, Keinan and Lehman paper examines the moderating role of product type on such social perceptions by undertaking a product-specific (i.e., hedonic versus utilitarian) investigation of people's opinions of counterfeit good buyers on dimensions of morality, likeability and attractiveness as a social other (e.g., friend, fellow shopper, etc.). Interestingly, while buyers of counterfeit utilitarian goods (e.g., software) are viewed as less moral, fair and considerate compared to buyers of the genuine versions, buyers of counterfeit hedonic goods (e.g., fashion) are views as more moral, fair and considerate compared to buyers of the real goods.

The final two papers complement the first set by investigating the socially-driven motivations guiding consumers' pre- and post-counterfeit good purchase psychologies. The McCabe & Rosenbaum paper draws on sociological research on delinquent behavior to examine how consumers rationalize this illegal consumption behavior. Their findings suggests that consumers of counterfeit luxury branded goods not only employ multiple rationalizations to justify their purchases but also do not, paradoxically, desire the real brands any less. The Wilcox, Kim and Sen paper draws on theories of self-monitoring and accompanying attitude functions (social-adjustive vs. value-expressive) to demonstrate a consumer by product interaction in the motivations underlying purchases of counterfeit luxury brands: the purchase decision of low versus high self-monitors is differentially influenced by the extent to which the counterfeit product is identifiable as a desired luxury brand.

Structure. Each presentation will be 20 minutes long. As with most fruitful sessions on emerging topics, this session is likely to generate more questions than answers and the final 10 minutes of the session will be devoted to a discussion of worthy research directions in this domain of consumer behavior.

Audience. The potential audience for this session is quite broad. It will appeal to researchers interested in illegal/aberrant consumption behaviors as well as, more broadly, to those interested in consumer decision making, motivation, and social norms and influences. Equally importantly, the session will be of interest to practitioners and regulators seeking to formulate effective anti-counterfeiting or piracy policies/strategies grounded in consumer insights.

Contributions. The contributions of this session are four-fold. First, it enhances our substantive understanding of the motivational and social underpinnings of an increasingly important domain of consumption behavior. Second, it draws on relevant theories of motivation, perception, preference and groups to advance our theoretical understanding of counterfeit good consumption. Third, this session combines the internal control of experimental work with the external validity of field surveys and ethnography to yield a methodologically robust set of insights into the consumption of counterfeit goods. Finally, this session brings together a diverse set of researchers whose research efforts in the area of counterfeit good consumption complement each other in the articulation of a fruitful research agenda on this important but under-examined consumer behavior topic.