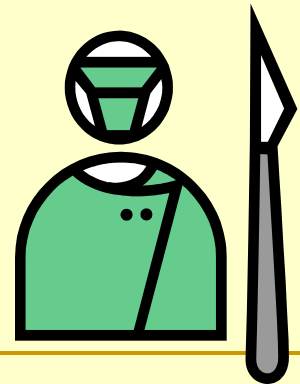
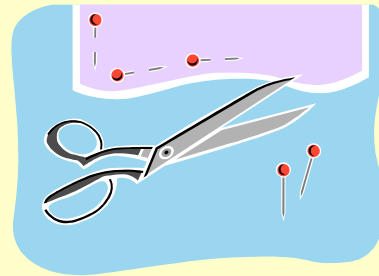
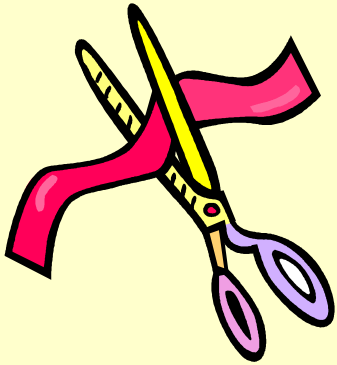

Cutting-Edge Sociological Consumer Research

Melanie Wallendorf
University of Arizona

Cutting?

- Definitions imply violence or trespass
- Clip art opens the question of what is cut?



Edge?

- Sharply-defined, clearly-defined
 - Establishes pattern from unshaped mass
 - Nothing beyond it
-

Sociology: A very brief intro.

- How social power is differentially distributed, esp. in contemporary, industrial and post-industrial societies



Sociology: A somewhat brief intro.

- How social power is differentially distributed, esp. in contemporary, industrial and post-industrial societies
 - Thus, interested in: gender, race, ethnicity, age, height, but not toe length
 - Like genetics and psychology, interested in differences
 - Not interested in “individual” differences but “group” differences in status/position/power
 - Interested in patterns of distribution of power
 - Who has it, and the longer-term process of how they got it, how they keep it, when they lose it
-

Sociology: An encapsulated intro.

- How social power is differentially distributed, esp. in contemporary, industrial and post-industrial societies
 - Thus, interested in: gender, race, ethnicity, age, height, but not toe length
 - Like biology (genetics) and psychology, interested in differences
 - Not interested in “individual” differences but “group” differences in status/position/power
 - Interested in patterns of distribution of power
 - Who has it, how they got it, how they keep it, when they lose it
 - Would be happy to study equality, but the data seldom points to it
-

Sociology: A growing-longer intro.

- How social power is differentially distributed, esp. in contemporary, industrial and post-industrial societies
 - Thus, interested in: gender, race, ethnicity, age, height, but not toe length
 - Like biology (genetics) and psychology, interested in differences
 - Not interested in “individual” differences but “group” differences in status/position/power
 - Interested in patterns of distribution of power
 - Who has it, and the longer-term process of how they got it, how they keep it, when they lose it
 - Would be happy to study equality, but the data seldom points to it
 - Uses methods appropriate to that theoretical topic
 - Sometimes qualitative data from interviews or (participant)-observation
 - Typically complex analysis of large-scale survey data, sometimes cross-sectional, sometimes longitudinal
 - Almost never relies on experiments
-

So, the big sociological question about consumption is

- How is consumption implicated in the patterned distribution of power?
 - Among consumers
 - Between consumers and producers
-

What does that question cut through?

- It cuts through an interest in consumption as the expression of individual differences
 - It cuts through a disinterest in the consequences of consumption
 - It cuts through the scholarly conflict of interest implied in a managerial perspective
-

Where has that cutting-edge question been addressed?

- Films
 - *The Corporation, Supersize Me*
 - Television documentaries
 - *People Like Us, Born Rich*
 - Books
 - *Cultural Creatives* (Ray)
 - *The McDonaldization of Society and Enchanting a Disenchanted World* (Ritzer)
 - *No Logo* (Klein),
 - *Born to Shop* (Schor),
 - *What Matters Most* (Hollender)
 - Magazine articles, Newspaper columns
 - Available at the movie theatre, the chain bookstore, the grocery store
-

Where else has that cutting-edge question been addressed?

- “Heroic Masculinity” Holt and Thompson, *JCR* Sept. 2004
 - “Marketplace Mythology and Discourses of Power” Thompson, *JCR* June 2004
 - “Consumers’ Republic” Lizabeth Cohen, *JCR* June 2004
 - “Social Influences on Dyadic Giving over Time” Lowry, Otnes, Ruth, *JCR* March 2004
 - “Rethinking the Origins of Involvement and Brand Commitment” Coulter, Price, Feick, *JCR* Sept. 2003
 - “Consumer Health” Moorman, *JCR* June 2002
 - “Consumer Choice as Sociohistorically Shaped” Allen, *JCR* March 2002
 - “Brand Community” Muñiz and O’Guinn, *JCR* March 2001
-

Where else will that cutting-edge question been addressed?

PREVIEW OF SOON-TO-BE-RELEASED TITLES

- “Normative Political Ideology” Crockett and Wallendorf, *JCR* Dec. 2004
 - “Families’ Inalienable Wealth” Curasi, Price, Arnould, *JCR* Dec. 2004
 - “Consumers’ Experiences of Glocalization” Thompson and Arsel, *JCR* Dec. 2004
 - “Consumer Movements, Activism, and Ideology” Kozinets and Handleman, *JCR* December 2004
 - “Social Class, Market Situation, and Metaphors of (Dis)empowerment” Henry, *JCR* March 2004
 - “Consumer Culture Theory (CCT)” Arnould and Thompson, *JCR* March 2005
-

What will the sociological edge cut next?

- TBD



Thanks to

- Students
- Organizers
- Fellow panelists

- I'm only a click away!

- mwallendorf@eller.arizona.edu
