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EDUCATION

Ph.D., University of Arizona, Eller College of Management expected May 2009

Major: Marketing
Minor: Sociology (cultural)

Dissertation: “Constructing Culture through Common Consumption Practices: Three Studies on the Role of Consumption”

Chair: Melanie Wallendorf

Committee: Robert Lusch and Hope Jensen Schau, marketing dept.
Jane Zavisca, sociology dept.

Proposal: Defended February 2008

Bachelor of Arts, University of Delaware, Honors Program May 2001

Major: Sociology
Minors: Business Administration and Spanish Studies

RESEARCH FOCUS

Sociological aspects of marketing and consumption, such as:

- Cultural knowledge and its impact on consumers and firms
- Consumption of experiences
- Social class and consumption
- Collective ritual consumption and community
- Corporate and interpersonal gift-giving

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Weinberger, Michelle F. and Melanie Wallendorf, “Reconstructing Culture and Community: The Role of Gift Tradition in Contemporary Culture,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, second submission invited. (*paper available upon request*)

Weinberger, Michelle F. (2008), “Non-Participation in Dominant Ritual Activity: A Cultural Sociology Perspective,” presented at the Consumer Culture Theory Conference, Boston, June.

Weinberger, Michelle F. (2008), “Experiential and Material Consumption: A Cultural Perspective on Experientialism,” in Angela Y. Lee and Dilip Soman (eds.), *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 35 (forthcoming).

Weinberger, Michelle F. and Melanie Wallendorf (2007), “Market Discourses of Community and Solidarity: Manifest and Latent Effects of Cultural Maintenance,” presented at the American Sociological Association pre-conference of the Consumer Studies Research Network, New York, August.

Weinberger, Michelle F. and Melanie Wallendorf (2007), "The Gift and Social Structure: Solidarity around Inequality," presented at the Consumer Culture Theory Conference, Toronto, June.

Weinberger, Michelle F. and Melanie Wallendorf, (2007), "Tradition and Renewal: Reconstruction of Culture through Consumption," in Gavan J. Fitzsimons and Vicki G. Morwitz (eds.), *Advances for Consumer Research*, Vol. 34., pp. 218 – 221.

HONORS AND AWARDS

- AMA Sheth Foundation Doctoral Consortium Fellow (Columbia, MO) 2008
- Dean's Research Award; Dean's Service Award 2008
Eller College of Management Awards, selected by Dean's office
- Lyle and Roslyn Payne Outstanding Marketing Doctoral Student award 2007
Research funding, winner selected by national jury of marketing academics
- National merit-based P.E.O. Scholars Award, finalist 2007
Research funding for graduate students based on research and service
- Doctoral comprehensive examination, high pass 2007
- Phi Beta Kappa, University of Delaware 2001
- National Collegiate Scholar 1999
- Arak Award for outstanding research writing, University of Delaware 1998

DISSERTATION RESEARCH

Title **Constructing Culture through Common Consumption Practices: Three Studies on the Role of Consumption**

Introduction **Resources and Culture**

- First draft complete; target *Journal of Marketing*

Cultural knowledge is considered as a resource that people draw on for support. This section proposes that culture acts as a supra-resource governing the use of economic and social resources by firms, consumers, and other social entities. It motivates three empirical studies that examine how cultural resources are (1) gathered by individual consumers, (2) deployed by individual consumers, or (3) deployed through collective consumption.

Empirical Study 1 **Reconstructing Culture and Community: The Role of Gift Tradition in Contemporary Culture**

- Under review, *Journal of Consumer Research* with Melanie Wallendorf

Investigates how deploying cultural knowledge through interpersonal gifting traditions and corporate sponsorship may reinforce or erode community stability.

Empirical Study 2 **Experientialism and the Consumption of Experiences: A Sociological Perspective**

- Data collection complete, analysis underway; target *Journal of Consumer Research*

Develops the concept of experientialism (i.e. placing a high value on the consumption of experiences) in order to examine how and why people consume experiences.

Empirical Study 3 **The Embeddedness of Minority Groups in Dominant Cultural Practices: Consumption Responses to Cultural Divides**

- Data analysis complete, draft being written; target *Journal of Consumer Research*

Investigates the ways that minority groups embedded in dominant culture use their consumption and their knowledge of dominant cultural practices to cope with their simultaneous roles as active members of society and yet outsiders to dominant practice.

OTHER RESEARCH PROJECTS

Advertising Creep and Community Solidarity: Challenges in Corporate Sponsorship

Early data collection; target *Journal of Marketing*

Consumers are sometimes critical about the intrusion of corporate marketing activities into their treasured cultural spaces. This project examines the process of boundary definition and protection engaged in by consumers who are concerned about corporate meanings dominating local cultural meanings. The empirical context is the proposed Corporate Partners program at the Golden Gate Bridge in California where local citizens and groups express a range of opinions over sponsorship. This research setting demonstrates the challenges of sponsorship and how stakeholder groups assert power positions.

Embracing Brands: Class, Community, and Legitimization

Data collection to begin November 2008 with Ashlee Humphreys, Northwestern University

Corporate sponsorship of events is sometimes celebrated by event participants and attendees. This project examines the role that sponsorship and branding play in structuring and validating community. Using the context of corporate sponsorship of NASCAR, it examines when sponsorship is embraced by participants and attendees, and the roles of social class and community.

TEACHING INTERESTS

- Consumer and Buyer Behavior
- Marketing Research/Methods
- Marketing Theory
- Marketing Communications
- Principles of Marketing
- Marketing Strategy

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor

Principles of Marketing for Business Majors undergraduate: 2005, 2006, 2007
Consumer and Buyer Behavior undergraduate: spring 2009, scheduled

Teaching Assistant

Consumer and Buyer Behavior undergraduate: 2004-2007, 6 sections of ~40
Market Research MBA and undergraduate: 2007
Qualitative Research Methods MBA and honors undergraduate: 2006, 2008
Capstone Marketing Strategy undergraduate: 2005

INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE

Media Analyst, CARMA International Washington, D.C. 2001-04

- Quantitative and qualitative research, analysis, reporting, and project management
- Clients included: S.C. Johnson, Sprint, Louisville Gas and Electric, Yahoo!

Marketing Assistant, Time Inc. (internship) New York, NY 2000

- Developed Hispanic direct marketing campaign
- Monitored direct marketing efforts

Sales/Marketing Representative, Mona Group Sunderland, MA 1998-99
(A division of Sinauer Associates Publishing)

- Client research, competitive analyses, and direct sales
- Recognized as top sales representative

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Marketing Association
Association for Consumer Research
American Sociological Association
Consumer Studies Research Network

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Journal of Consumer Research, Trainee Reviewer 2007-08
New Doctoral Student Coordinator, Elected 2006-07, 2007-08
Consumer Culture Theory Conference, Reviewer 2007
Association for Consumer Research Conference, Reviewer 2006-07
Asia Pacific 2006, Europe 2007, North America 2007

COURSEWORK

Marketing

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Marketing Theory and History | Robert Lusch |
| Philosophy of Science | Linda Price |
| Marketing Management and Strategy | Shankar Ganesan |
| Marketing Models | Yubo Chen |
| Consumer Behavior: Psychological | Merrie Brucks |
| Consumer Behavior: Socio-Cultural | Melanie Wallendorf |
| Management Strategy in Marketing | Alan Malter |
| Behavioral Pricing | Lance Erickson |

Research Methods and Statistics

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Experimental Research | Patrick McKnight (psychology) |
| Survey Design | Barbara Gutek (management) |
| Grounded Theory | Sheila Slaughter |
| Qualitative Methods | Eric Arnould |
| Univariate Statistics | Charles Ragin (sociology) |
| Multivariate Statistics | Miller McPherson (sociology) |
| SEM, HLM, Time Series Analysis | Erin Leahy (sociology) |
| MSI Qualitative Data Analysis | E. Arnould, R. Belk, E. Fischer, R. Kozinets, E. McQuarrie, J. Ozanne, L. Price, L. Scott, J. Sherry, C. Thompson and M. Wallendorf |
| Workshops 2005, 2007 | |

Sociology

| | |
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| Advanced undergraduate seminars (University of Delaware) | |
| Material Culture Studies | Lu Ann De Cunzo |
| Sociology of Health Care Organizations | David Ermann |
| Theory of Society | Gerald Turkel |
| Innovations, Fads, and Fashions | Joel Best |
| International Migration | Mark Miller |
| Sociology of Corporate Crime | David Ermann |
| Doctoral seminars (University of Arizona) | |
| Sociological Theory | Ronald Breiger |
| Sociology of Culture | Jane Zavisca |
| Objects and Methods of Cultural Analysis | Ronald Breiger |

REFERENCES

Melanie Wallendorf

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Note: Any member of the faculty or course professor may be contacted as a reference.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Title **Constructing Culture through Common Consumption Practices: Three Studies on the Role of Consumption**

Overview **Resources and Culture**

Introduction targeted to *Journal of Marketing*

This dissertation focuses on how consumers gather and deploy cultural resources in their lives and the role of the marketplace in that process. Cultural resources are the myriad of knowledge schemas that people use to operate in the world, learned through socialization and experience. I examine the ways that consumption, culture, and the marketplace interact to create powerful, but often invisible, power structures in society. Understanding the ways culture guides action is essential for firms and policy makers to manage their products and programs.

The introduction proposes that culture acts as a resource that governs the utilization of economic and social resources in society by firms, consumers, and other social entities. In this sense culture is a supra-resource, tacitly facilitating or inhibiting one's ability to access other resources. The introductory chapter motivates three empirical studies that examine how cultural resources are (1) gathered by individual consumers, (2) deployed by individual consumers, or (3) deployed through collective consumption. Each empirical study is a self-contained project with its own theoretical development and contribution to the marketing literature, yet each contributes to an overall theoretical understanding of how culture works.

Study 1 **Reconstructing Culture and Community: The Role of Gift Tradition in Contemporary Culture**

Second submission invited, *Journal of Consumer Research* with Melanie Wallendorf
(paper available upon request)

This study examines how gifting traditions become resources in creating and maintaining community, and the social structure that gives form to that community. I study the re-enactment of tradition during unsettled times to understand how gifting contributes to community re-stabilization, and the tenuous role of the marketplace in that process. This study articulates how participation in a gifting tradition can provide a common moral orientation for rebuilding community in unsettled times and illuminates the larger role that individual giving practices play in forming society in more settled periods.

Data collection occurred in February 2006 as a sited ethnography among local residents of New Orleans during family oriented, community based celebrations of the first Mardi Gras after hurricane Katrina. The data are based on participant observation, in-context interviews, material objects, photographs, city documents, and media coverage. This study demonstrates how cultural knowledge of gifting traditions is collectively deployed to reconstruct community.

Study 2 **Consumption of Experiences and Experientialism: a Sociological Perspective**

Data collection complete, analysis underway; target *Journal of Consumer Research*

Marketing research has focused predominantly on the acquisition, use, and valuation of material goods. While studies of services marketing examine the challenges firms face when intangible services are provided, less research has focused on peoples attraction to consuming temporarily ephemeral, intangible experiences with value that cannot be reclaimed later (e.g. travel, dining, leisure activities). Drawing on sociological and

marketing theory, this research describes what it is about experiences that make them so valuable, treasured, and sanctified. It focuses on how people strategically accumulate experiences to be used as distinguishing cultural resources in their lives.

Depth interviews were conducted with middle class people between the ages of 22 and 35 who chose to delay marriage after college and place high value on gaining experiences. This is a time when they have few responsibilities, little property, and few ties to community allowing them to choose between exploring and settling down. This life situation provides an ideal context to observe daily deliberation about desired experiences in the realms of jobs, locations, leisure activities, romantic involvement, housing, furnishings, clothing, and food. Because such deliberations are ongoing for this sample, they can articulate their assessment with regard to recent experiences about which they have already formed solid evaluations. In the end, this project lays the groundwork for understanding why experiences are so valuable, describing how they are strategically accumulated and to what ends, elucidating the sociological role of experientialism in contemporary culture.

Study 3 The Embeddedness of Minority Groups in Dominant Cultural Practices: Consumption Responses to Cultural Divides

Data analysis complete, draft being written; target *Journal of Consumer Research*

Dominant consumption practices become part of the mainstream landscape, part of general cultural knowledge held by all, a commonality for communication and understanding. Their power comes from the implicit knowledge of how others will read that practice even by minority groups who might not participate in the dominant consumption practice. This project examines what happens when a minority group does not participate in the deeply embedded cultural and commercial practices of the majority. It investigates the ways that minority groups embedded in dominant culture use their consumption and their knowledge of dominant cultural practices to cope with their simultaneous roles as active members of society and yet outsiders to dominant practice.

This research is based in the context of the 15 million Americans who do not celebrate Christmas despite living among American culture, Christian activities, and retail establishments that are oriented toward the holiday. The minority groups examined here reject Christian beliefs yet, as members of American consumer society, they must still navigate the pervasive Christmas season in their daily lives. Data includes depth interviews and guided diaries from Jews, Muslims, Atheists, Hindus, and Jehovah's Witnesses collected in the months surrounding Christmas of 2006 and 2007. The analysis takes a sociological perspective examining what happens in the vacancy created by dominant consumption practices and how the marketplace is employed as a resource for minority consumers as they navigate this cultural terrain.