

ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE: WHY WE NEED IT TO UNDERSTAND BEHAVIOR

Alan Elliott

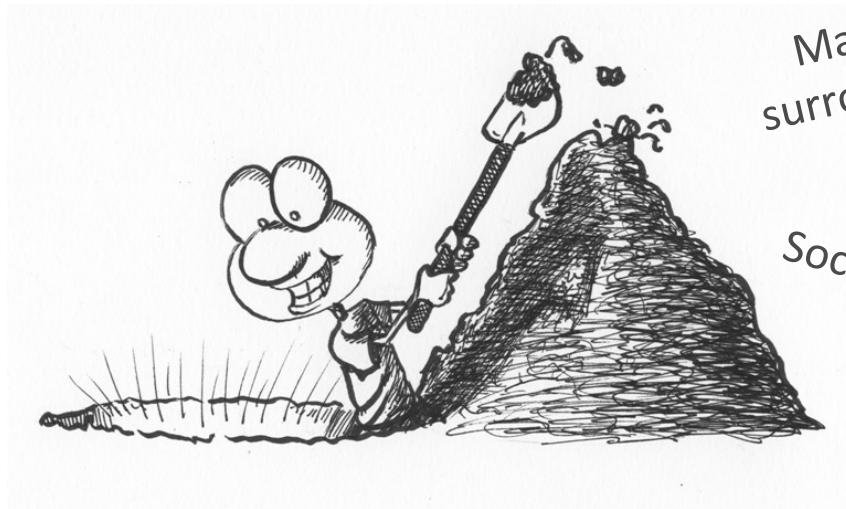
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Special Thanks

- Professor Hal Wilhite, Professor of Social Anthropology and Research Director (University of Oslo)
- Katherine Randazzo, Director of Advanced Analytics (Opinion Dynamics)

How do we dig deeper?



Material surroundings

Habits

Household tradition

Social relationships

Symbols

Language

MESSAGING THAT SPEAKS MORE MEANINGFULLY TO THE TARGETED LISTENER AND ENCOURAGES DESIRED EE BEHAVIORS



What we did

- Methods

- Reviewed three anthropological theories:

- Webs of Meaning (Geertz)
 - Linguistic Shifters (Silverstein)
 - Distributed Agency (Wilhite)

- Review of marketing materials from California's Flex Your Power and Massachusetts' Mass Save campaigns

- Key research questions

- What are some of the anthropological concepts behind past marketing efforts (used perhaps unwittingly)?
 - How could the messaging in these efforts be augmented by anthropological concepts and encourage desired behaviors?



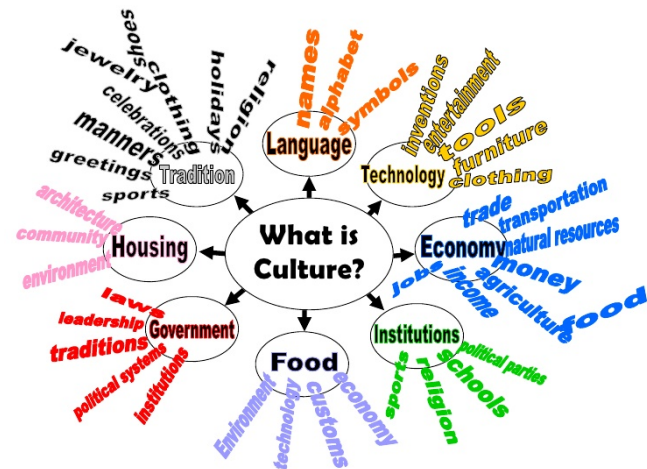
Webs of Meaning (Geertz 1973 and Weber)



Webs of Meaning (Geertz 1973 and Weber)

- Key Principles:
 - “Culture” consists of multiple layers of shared and individualized meaning; varies from person to person
 - Understanding behavior requires exploration of the symbolic and social meaning (the “thick description”) of a behavior

- Where we see it in marketing:
 - Tailored messaging and definitions of concepts (i.e., to ethnicity, socio-economic context)
 - Localized messaging



Tailoring to socio-economic groups



Do you see hope for the future in their eyes? We made sacrifices, worked two jobs, even missed vacations, so they could have a better future and a better life. But global warming risks everything we have worked for. It causes erratic weather, like droughts which can raise the price of fruits and vegetables. And severe storms that can drive up the cost of housing and impact jobs. There's no question global warming can jeopardize our children's future.

It doesn't have to be that way. The fight against global warming starts at home. If we all work together, small steps can make a big difference. For example, if we all replace five common incandescent bulbs with energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs, it's like taking 400,000 cars off the road.



Tailoring to socio-economic groups



A TAILORED DEFINITION OF “SACRIFICE”



Do you see hope for the future in their eyes? Many of us moved to the U.S. for our children.

We made sacrifices, worked two jobs, even missed vacations, so they could have a better future and a better life. But global warming risks everything we have worked for. It causes erratic weather, like droughts which can raise the price of fruits and vegetables. And severe storms that can drive up the cost of housing and impact jobs. There's no question global warming can jeopardize our children's future.

It doesn't have to be that way. The fight against global warming starts at home. If we all work together, small steps can make a big difference. For example, if we all replace five common incandescent bulbs with energy-



But are there different ways to create personal meaning?



- Culture is not always reflexive
- How do we process information?
- How do we conceive of ourselves in our daily life?



Linguistic Shifters (Silverstein 1976)

- Key Principles:
 - The meaning (or “reference”) of certain words shift depending on the speaker, the listener, and the conversation’s context
 - Language can indicate relationships between the speaker and the listener and their placement within socio-cultural groups
- Where we see it in marketing
 - Messaging that uses shifters to make the listener care about the issue
 - Strategic use of pronouns “we” and “us” to place the speaker and listener in a common social group (i.e., “We, Californians”)

Version A: General Population



Version B: “Income-Qualified”



Distributed Agency (Wilhite 2007)

- Key Principles:
 - Technologies have a number of potentials, only some of which are intended by their designers
 - Consumers also have a number of potential usage options for the technology; options often influenced by household custom and the material circumstances of their home
 - These two sets of “potentials” interact to “domesticate” technology

CONSUMPTION IS CULTURE AND CONSUMPTION IS ENERGY USE

Culture = Energy Use



Conclusion: Tips for future marketing efforts

- Getting as close to “thick description” as possible
 - Depth interviewing with a focus on:
 - People as “doers” of things
 - Habits and daily life practice
 - The spatial arrangement of the home
- Consider the speaker when targeting the intended listener
 - Who within a social grouping is a credible source of information?
 - How do big words like “responsibility” shift their meanings based on who is speaking and who is listening?



Thank You

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Version A: General Population



SummerRCS_NatGridEAST_60.mp3

Version B: “Income-Qualified”



LowIncome_Eastern.mp3

