

Mining Anthropology to Guide Strategic Communications

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Anthropology and Strategic Communications

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF YOUR CUSTOMER

PYGMY HUNTERS
Why Microsoft (and others) hiring ANTHROPOLOGISTS to study fast-growing little companies

Watch and Learn
Marketers are jumping on the ethnography bandwagon. But can the practice

LEAD ARTICLE **Ethnography**

How it works in NPD research

ANTHROPOLOGY NOT JUST FOR ACADEMIA
Insights that emerge from ethnography can form the basis of innovative product concepts, providing a competitive edge for pharmaceutical marketers. BY GINA GUISSEMANN

WATCH ME NOW

ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH IS GAINING TRACTION AMONG BUSINESSES LOOKING FOR A DISCERNIBLE EDGE IN PREDICTING CONSUMER BEHAVIOR.

It's anthropological!
Research takes 'cultural' bent
By J.C. LOUIS

LinkedIn Anthropology Groups (some)

- **American Anthropological Association**
- **Career Anthropologist**
- **Consumer Anthropology**
- **Cyber & Web Anthropology**
- **Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference**
- **Ethnography Forum**
- **Ethnography and other
Consumer Research Methodologies**
- **Ethnosnacker**
- **Media Anthropology**
- **National Association for the Practice of Anthropology**
- **The Anthropology Network**
- **Netnography**

Why Anthropology?

- Human behavior is complex and often contradictory
- Competition is increasingly inventive and pressing
- Need to dig in new places to understand why and how people buy brands
- Desire for fresh approaches
- Exotic = different = distinctive = unique brand identity and appeal



McCracken on Culture and Consumers

- **Corporations are “bad at reading culture, bad at staying in touch with culture, bad at working with culture.”**
- **Culture is: “the body of ideas, emotions, and activities that make up the life of the consumer.”**
- **What corporations need: Chief Culture Officer**

Rule #1: Make the Familiar Strange

- **Marketers from Mars**
- **Purposeful naiveté enables anthropologists to perceive and deconstruct everyday behaviors**
- **Look at the mundane – house cleaning, supermarket trips, breakfast routines – as exotic**



Rule #2: Think Differently

Dr. Phil

Needs and Wants

**Most of us think in
psychological terms**

"It's not you, it's me."

"Scapegoat"

Psychographics

Perception

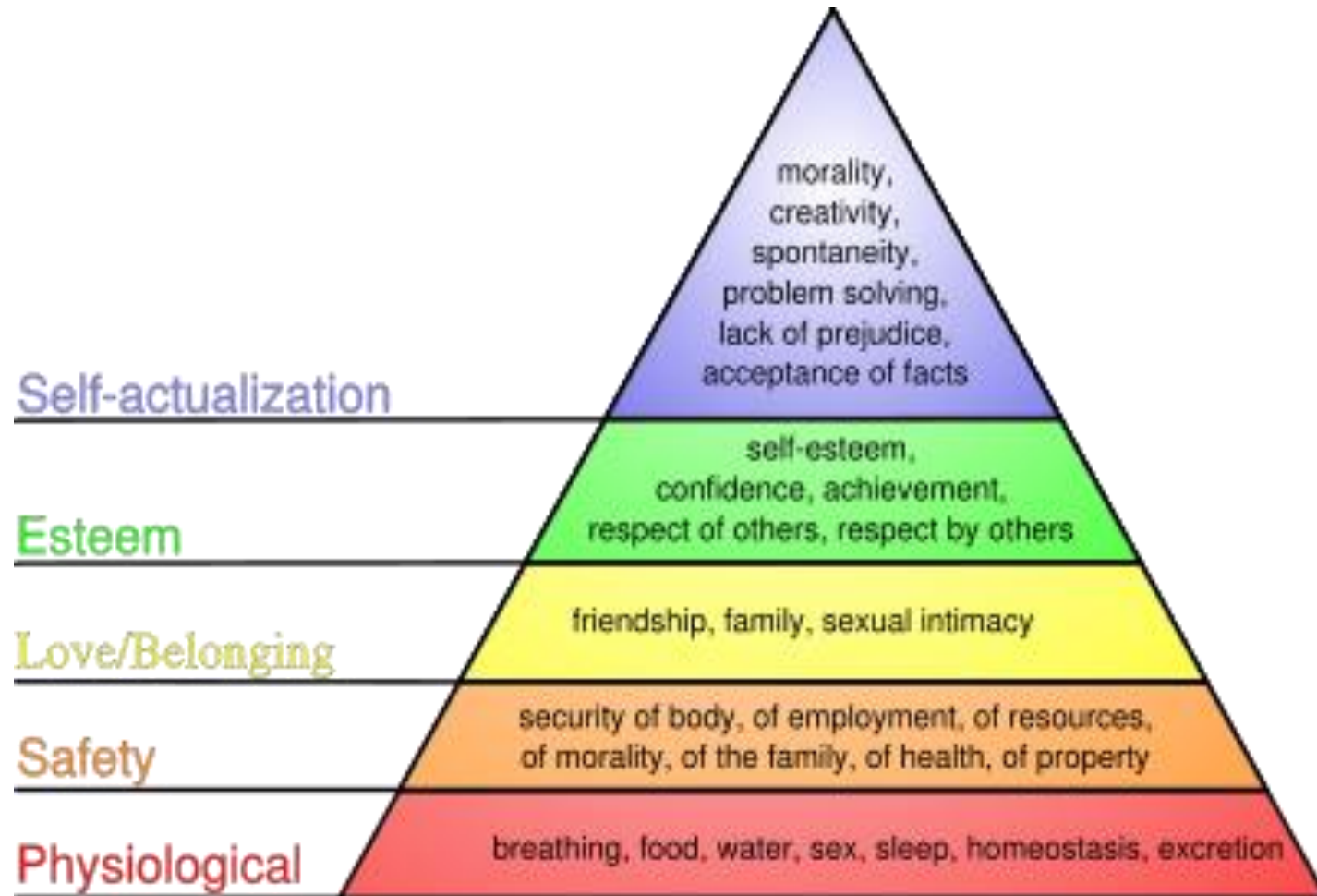
Emotion

Intention

Concepts like mindfulness, locus of control, cognitive dissonance

If Maslow had a dollar...

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Psychological Techniques in Market Research

- Personification
- Deprivation
- Perception Mapping
- Direct and indirect questions in focus groups and surveys
- Many more



Another Pathway

Psychology is helpful but it's not the only way toward deep strategic insights

Anthropological Approaches

- **Fundamental questions**
 - **What is breakfast? What does clean mean?**
- **Impact of human nature on behavior**
- **Stories and beliefs**
- **Symbols and codes**
- **Rituals**
- **Rites of passage**

Anthropological Approaches (cont'd)

- **Tribalism**
- **Social Interactions: Family, friends, others**
- **Reciprocity**
- **Binary oppositions**
- **Expressive and instrumental perspectives**
- **Shared rules, meanings, ideas (culture)**
- **Methods: Ethnography, life history analysis**

Cup of Culture



The Anthropology of Coffee

- **Focus on symbolism, not taste**
 - Tradition v. Modernity
 - Fashion
 - Sociability
 - Family and home (Folgers)
 - Values (Fair Trade)
 - Small indulgences (Starbucks)
 - Rite of Passage (for teens)
 - Drug (stimulant)
 - Strength
 - Relaxation

Ritual

Rappaport on Ritual

“The purposes of ritual are varied; they include the satisfaction of emotional needs, strengthening of social bonds, stating one’s affiliation, or just for the pleasure of the ritual itself.”

Rites of Passage



Separation

Transformation

Reintegration

Passages



Breakfast Transformations

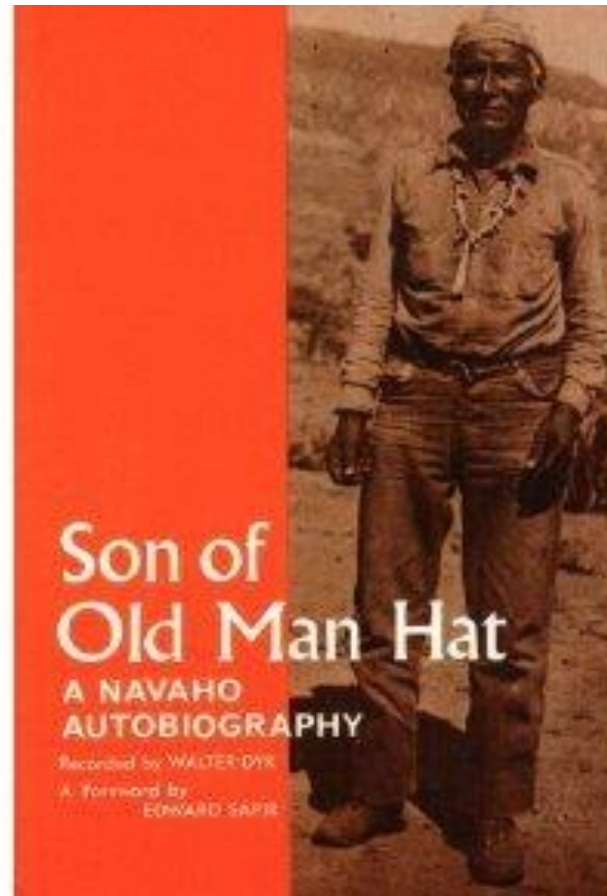


Ritual Analysis of Breakfast

- Asked respondents what breakfast *is*.
- In-between, ritual-like time; a liminal period
 - Consumers move over threshold, sleep to waking, private to public self
 - HBO an essential component of transformation
 - Sensate attributes of sweetness and crunch made respondents feel happy, optimistic, joyful
 - Promised positive beginning to their day
- Contributor to Creative Brief and advertising

Life History Analysis

Life History as Access to Culture



The Invisible Man



Access Through Personal History

- Respondents transposed sentiments regarding pariah status to other times in their lives
- Described experiences in middle school with emotional pain from social stigma
- Led them to wish to be "invisible"
- Inspired advertising strategy that stressed smokers' desire for invisibility

Telling a Story, Selling a Brand

- TV ad depicted a couple kissing at a restaurant
- The woman, not sensing a hint of tobacco asks, "Did you quit smoking?"
- The man replies, "Did I?"
 - Brand promise: renders smoker's habit invisible
- Ads exceeded expectations in test and in-market



Culture Codes

Horse Power



Clotaire Rapaille on Jeep Wrangler

- For Americans, Jeep represents Western plains
- Symbolized by a horse
- Rapaille convinced Jeep to redesign Wrangler
 - Headlights should mimic horse eyes
 - Round instead of square
- Sales rose dramatically



Getting There



Cadillac Relaunch

- **Cadillac was once premiere luxury auto in US**
- **Impacted by competition, lackluster products, aging buyer base**
- **In 2000, ranked #6 behind Lexus, MB, BMW, Acura, Audi**
- **Not relevant to 30-50 year old target**
- **In 2002, Cadillac redesigned product line**
- **Needed new brand positioning and communications strategy**

An Anthropological Approach

- Existing research suggested Cadillac didn't address what people wanted in a luxury car
- Cultural perspective focused not on what people want in a car or even luxury
- Asked about markers of success in America

American Success

- **Success via American Dream is earned**
- **Ethics of working hard, being driven, hunger for recognition**
- **Change from where they were, where their parents had been**
- **Once success is achieved, it is *celebrated***

Success and Cadillac

- Cars correspond with recognition of earned success
- Cadillac described by buyers not via performance or luxury but *arrival*
- Reinvention of self is American cultural story
 - Not as workable for Lexus, MB, BMW, Acura, Audi
 - Fitting for Cadillac



Breakthrough Communications Strategy

- Cadillac repositioned as “American Success”
- Campaign ran 2002 to 2005
- Moved from 6th to 3rd luxury car in America

Ethnography

Anthropology and Ethnography

- **Anthropology is the overall discipline**
- **Ethnography is a method**
- **In business, often conflated**

Marvin Harris on Franz Boas

“His mission had been to rid anthropology of amateurs and armchair specialists by making ethnographic research in the field the central experience and minimum attribute of professional status.”

Ethnography

- **Description of people's behavior and attitudes where they live, work, play, eat, shop**
- **Principal cultural anthropology method of data collection**
- **Accomplished via participant observation**
 - Listening and observing
- **Begins with intentionally naïve observation and inquiry**
- **In anthropology, entails theoretically informed interpretation**



Ethnography in Market Research

- **Sometimes informed by anthropology, sometimes not**
- **Basic observational research not deeply analytical**
- **Best ethnography is “thick description” with profound interpretation**

Ethnography - Uses

- **Naturalistic, context-based understanding**
- **Understand consumers at more than Q&A level**
- **Difference between what consumers say they do and what they do**
- **User experience studies for new products**
- **Observations and interviews ignite insights**

Olfactory Rewards



My Cat Does Not Stink!

- **Febreze initially a home smell *eliminator***
- **Test advertising under-performed**
- **Conducted ethnographies and in one case...**
 - Home was clean and neat
 - Ethnographers thought 9 cats stunk up the house
 - Respondent didn't perceive stink; used to it
- **Insensitivity to bad smells found in many homes**
- **Febreze had the wrong brand promise**
 - Solved a problem people did not think they had

On the Scent

- Additional ethnographies revealed best story
- **“A mini-celebration when I’m done with a room.”**
- End point of the “cleaning ritual”
- A reward
- Febreze enhanced its scent and told this story in ads
- Became a major success
- Recent and current ads are odor elimination focused

Name That Brand

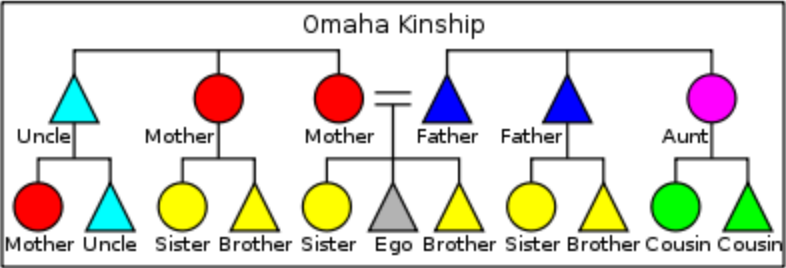
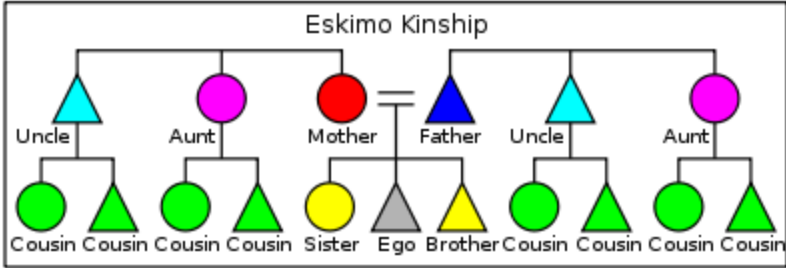
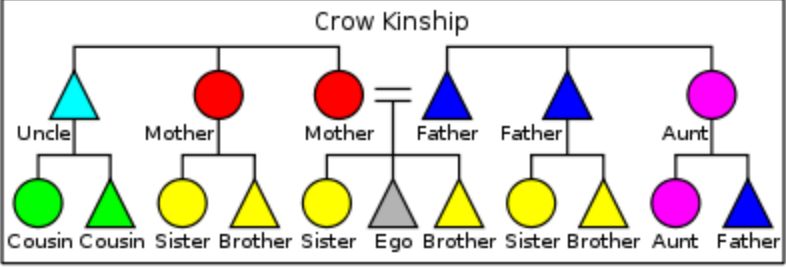
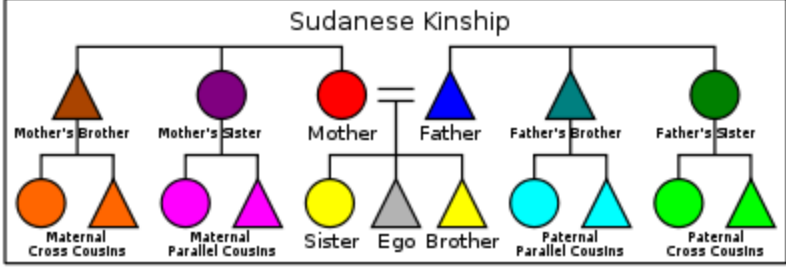
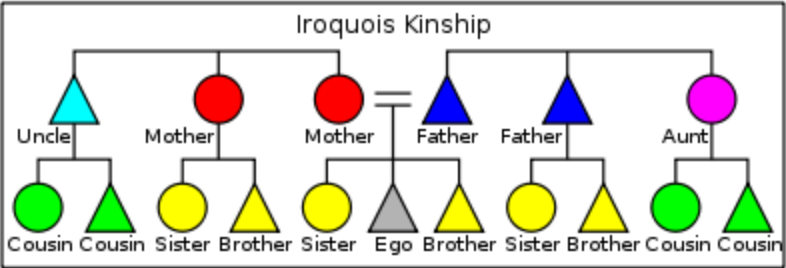
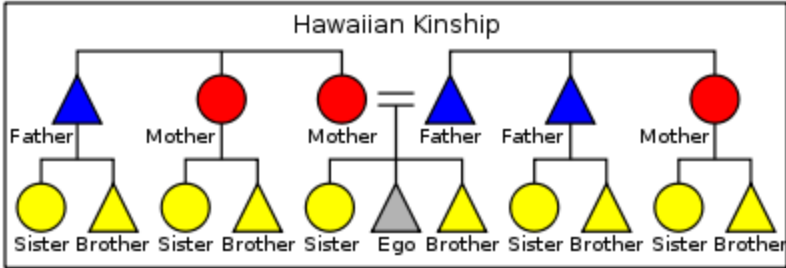


Two Values of Ethnography

- **Recruited Pine-Sol users for ethnographies**
- **When asked to take out Pine-Sol, produced store brand, referred to it as Pine-Sol**
- **Implications**
 - Communications in advertising and on packaging had to work harder to distinguish brand
 - Needed future respondents to describe label of brand in cupboard when recruited

Social Relationships

Relativity



Out of the Box Thinking



Moms and Memories

- Mothers asked to reflect back on when they shopped with their moms
- Happy memories of shopping trips when allowed to participate in brand selection
 - Recalled how powerful they felt, how much they appreciated their mom for granting a privilege
- Realized they could have same experience with their children



Relationship Marketing

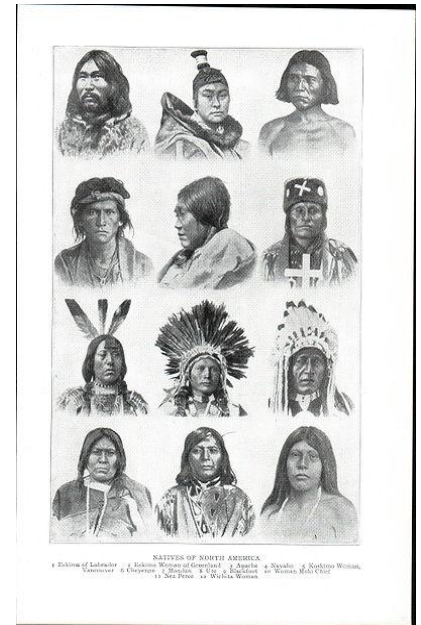
- **Brand could be about mom/child *relationship***
 - Cereal shopping enjoyable as a shared decision-making process and a rite of childhood
 - Moms would feel good about empowering their kids
- **Communications should stress...**
 - Not what was inside the cereal box
 - What is inside the hearts and minds of mothers and children



Tribes

Tribe as a Cultural idea

- Shared symbols, language, values, goals
- Markers: clothing, tattoos, flags, make-up
- Narratives forge member connections
- Rituals separate sacred from mundane
 - Elevate and enhance tribal identity
- “Us” vs. “Them”
 - Rivalries boost tribal cohesion
 - View different tribes as “the other”



Weekend Warriors



Tribal Identity and Major League Soccer



NY Times 6/24/11 (Front Page)



TA As Tribe

- **Rituals**
 - Tailgating, events at local bars, songs
 - Rallying the crowd
 - Trips to away games
- **Narrative**
 - Players as Heroes
- **Community**
 - Volunteer with youth soccer organizations
 - Promote team locally to friends, colleagues, others
- **Identity**
 - Stand out in a stadium crowd
 - Face paint, branded towels and other gear
 - Elected titles and business cards
 - Recognized within and outside stadium

Communications Implications

- Duplicate TA pattern elsewhere
- Community involvement
- Tell players' stories
- Amplify competition
- Expand connection, passion, and commitment
- Make it viral: Social media, PR, commentary, etc.



Becoming a Communications Anthropologist

- Pay attention to social interactions, social media, popular TV
- Ask questions about the obvious
- Do fieldwork
- Read sub-text messages of ads, social media
- Frame questions differently (think culture, not only psychology)
- Enlist colleagues to do the same...*everyday*

An Exercise

- **Choose a category or brand**
- **Frame hypotheses and questions as a strategic communications anthropologist**
- **Share with session**

Thank You

Case History Sources

- **Honey Bunches of Oats: Morais**
- **Pebbles: Morais**
- **Targon: Morais**
- **Jeep: C. Rapaille (2006)**
- **Cadillac: T. Malefyt, BBDO**
- **Febreze: C. Duhigg, NY Times Magazine 2/19/12**
- **Pine-Sol: Morais**
- **MLS: Morais/The Family Room**

- **Some thinking on coffee taken from P. Sunderland and R. Denny (2007); most Morais**
- **For more on much of what is discussed here, see the following Resource Guide**

Resource Guide

- Bill Abrams. *The Observational Research Handbook*. Chicago: NTC Books/American Marketing Association. 2000
- Marietta Baba. “Anthropology and Business” in H. J. Birx (ed). *Encyclopedia of Anthropology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. 2006.
- [Febreze story: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/shopping-habits.html?_r=3&hp=&pagewanted=all](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/19/magazine/shopping-habits.html?_r=3&hp=&pagewanted=all)
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