



Models of Omnivorous Cultural Consumption

Seminar organised by the ESRC/AHRC Cultures of Consumption research programme in collaboration with the ESRC Centre for Research on Innovation and Competition, University of Manchester

Wednesday November 29, 2006

In the 1990s, Richard A. Peterson and his collaborators published a series of articles in which they argued that openness to diversity is replacing exclusive preference for high culture as a means of class distinction. Based on survey research showing that high status is associated with preference for, and participation in, a broad range of cultural genres and activities, Peterson argued that the distinction between omnivores and univores is replacing the opposition between the snob and the masses as a central criterion for classifying cultural practices and styles of consumption.

Over the past decade, numerous studies conducted in different countries, using qualitative and quantitative methodologies, and focusing on various cultural domains have, by and large, confirmed the initial findings. However, many of these studies suggest important qualifications to Peterson's argument. First, omnivore tastes seem to be much more widely distributed than initially envisaged, as openness to diversity is increasingly presented in popular discourse as a normative ideal regulating all aspects of social life. Second, there is growing evidence that omnivorousness comes in many different shades ranging from highbrow to lowbrow omnivores.

The main objective of the proposed workshop is to examine different models of openness to diversity developed in recent research on cultural consumption. What are the commonalities and divergences in the various models of omnivore consumption developed over the past few years? Are there more and less legitimate ways of expressing omnivorous tastes? Is omnivore consumption an extension of past practices and discourses about culture or does it represent a radical break with them? How do measures and methodologies influence conceptualisation and empirical findings?

The seminar is being organised by Michèle Ollivier and hosted by Professor Alan Warde at the University of Manchester, with the support of the ESRC Centre for Research on Innovation and Competition (CRIC), the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC), and the ESRC/AHRC Cultures of Consumption research programme. It will consist in paper presentations followed by discussion. For more information please contact Michèle Ollivier, International Visiting Fellow in the Cultures of Consumption programme, at ollivier@uottawa.ca.

PROGRAMME

The seminar will take place at the Centre for Research on Innovation and Competition (CRIC) in the Harold Hankins Building (level 10) of the University of Manchester, Booth Street West.

The seminar is free. Coffee will be available from 10.30. Sessions will start at 11. Lunch will be served (there may be a small charge). The working day will finish with tea at 16.30.

Papers will be delivered by Michèle Ollivier, Richard A. Peterson, Gindo Tampubolon, Taru Virtanen, Alan Warde and David Wright, and Ian Woodward.

To register for the seminar please contact Tricia.Dennett@manchester.ac.uk. She will advise on hotel accommodation and will also provide travel instructions if required. It is the intention that the number of participants be restricted in order to facilitate discussion so please book early to avoid disappointment.

