Marketing Colloquium  
Distinguished Speaker Series  
Department of Marketing  
Iowa State University  
Fall 2016

September 23, 2016  1:15pm – 3:00pm  Room: 3164 Gerdin

Dr. Mary C. Gilly  
Senior Associate Dean and Professor of Marketing at the Paul Merage School of Business, University of California, Irvine

WANT VS. NEED: THE BATTLE FOR A LIMITED BUDGET

Abstract
Wants and needs are central to marketing theories of consumption and the regulation of consumption. Yet research has devoted little attention to how consumers experience wanting. This research is grounded in the everyday experiences of indebted consumers enrolled in a debt management program, a context where wanting is acute. Based on the literature, focus groups, and longitudinal surveys, we develop wanting as a construct. We find that wanting is an everyday craving for hedonic items that serve immediate pleasure, identity building and social connection purposes. By focusing on the experience of wanting, we gain an understanding of the lived experience of consumers’ rhetorical efforts to categorize needs and wants. We show that while some consumers consistently define and privilege needs, most employ rhetorical strategies that allow them to alter and undermine their budgets and enable purchases of wanted products. We discuss theoretical and practical implications of these processes for consumer research.

Short Bio
Mary C. Gilly is Senior Associate Dean and Professor of Marketing at the Paul Merage School of Business, University of California, Irvine. Her research addresses consumer behavior issues using a multi-method approach. Most of her research is within the area of services and technology, with an equally strong interest in cultural issues. Throughout her career, Dr. Gilly has been interested in underserved and at-risk consumers, as well as unintended consequences of marketing actions. Her research appears in premier journals, including the Journal of Consumer Research, the Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Retailing and the Journal of Business Research. She is the recipient of the 2011 Williams-Qualls-Spratlen (WQS) Multicultural Mentoring Award of Excellence from the American Marketing Association Foundation.