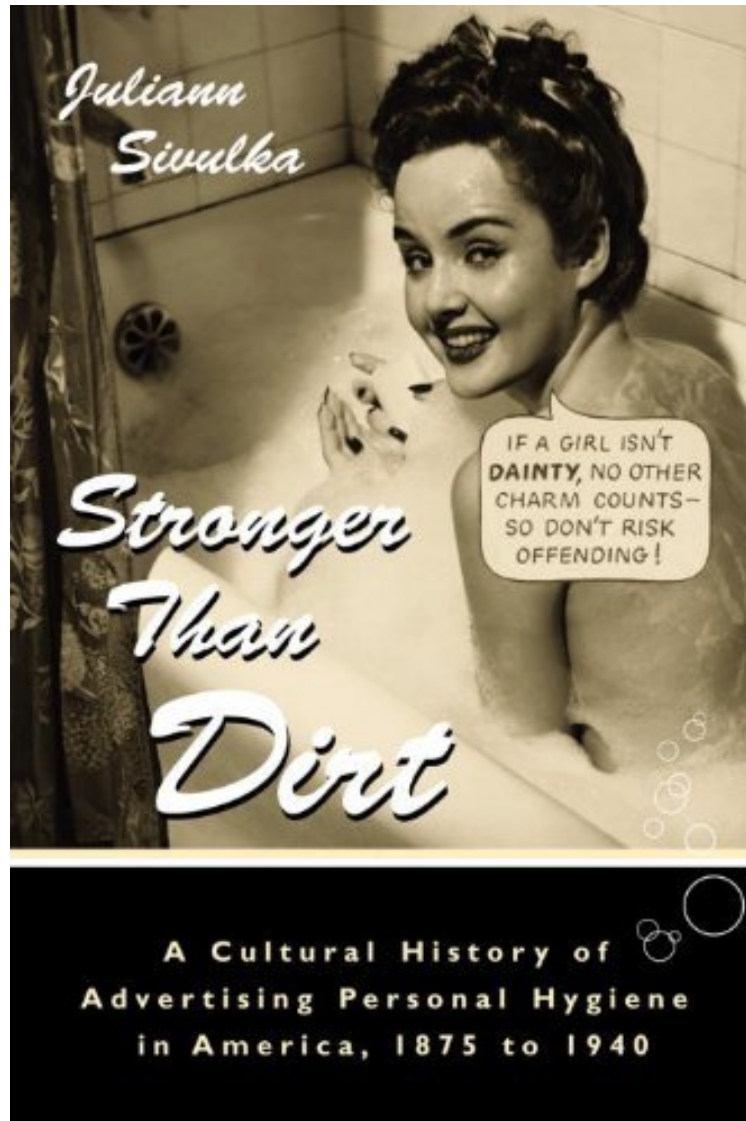


(Download) Stronger Than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1875-1940

## Stronger Than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1875-1940

Juliann Sivulka

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**Juliann Sivulka : Stronger Than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1875-1940** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Stronger Than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1875-1940:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Soft SoapBy Ian GordonSivulka used to teach at the University of South Carolina. She now teaches at Waseda in Japan. I did not care for this book when I reviewed it for the Journal of American History, (Vol. 89 (March 2003): 1450-1451) since I thought Sivulka had a lot of examples of advertising,

but really could not analyze advertising or its broader cultural connotations very well. I was also struck by the absence from the bibliography of Susan Strasser's *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, which I thought an essential work to this study. Then I read Vincent Vinikas's review in the *American Historical Review* (Vol. 108 (June 2003): 851-52) and found more reasons not to respect this book. My advice is to read Vinikas's *Soft Soap, Hard Sell: American Hygiene in an Age of Advertisement*<sup>4</sup> of 6 people found the following review helpful. Disappointing. By suzanne312 Reads like a doctoral thesis; not very accessible. Some parts were interesting, though.

Only a century ago the privilege of washing with soap was mainly a special prerogative of the well to do, and a bath was something most people avoided. But by the end of World War I a revolution in standards of personal hygiene had taken place. Soap was not only more widely used but was suddenly viewed as a powerful symbol of purification, civilization, and progress. What caused this radical shift in attitudes? In this fascinating cultural history, Juliann Sivulka shows that the transformation of soap from luxury product to everyday staple and symbol of success was the result of both the newly emerging advertising industry and large-scale societal changes brought on by the modernization of daily life. The new emphasis on soap translated into more elaborate cleanliness rituals, creating in turn specialized places devoted to care of the body, more complex domestic interiors, and eventually new customers for an emerging consumer society. Making use of a large body of primary research material, Sivulka's study reveals that cleanliness came to symbolize a morally superior and civilized individual. Keeping clean, according to advertisements, was not only a healthy habit, it also ensured romance, material abundance, and acceptance into the successful white middle class. Advertisements also reflected women's changing roles as agents of cleanliness, as well as creators of mass cultural images that reinforced narrow stereotypes of both men's and women's role in society, which feminists later protested. The African American consumer culture and personal cleanliness rituals emerged in a pattern similar to their white counterparts but were informed by politics of appearance. This profusely illustrated study is full of insights about the development of the consumer culture that we all take for granted. Sivulka reveals many interesting connections between our attitudes toward cleanliness and conceptions of the body, inhabited space, social class, gender, and race.

From Library Journal This new book by Sivulka (journalism and mass communications, Univ. of South Carolina) makes a good case that advertising was a major factor in Americans' heightened awareness of personal hygiene, which began in the middle of the 19th century. Sivulka concentrates on how soap, towel, and plumbing manufacturers used advertising in ever more sophisticated ways to convince Americans, especially women, that buying their products would improve their lives. He examines various advertising campaigns in some detail and considers the use of new forms of mass communication such as magazines and radio. He also looks at racial prejudices concerning cleanliness and how African Americans were influenced by hygiene advertising. This is not a history of hygiene little medical information is offered but instead a study of the role advertising played in shaping public opinion on commercial personal hygiene products. Scholarly, well documented, and clearly written, this book is definitely recommended for all libraries with advertising collections, but other libraries can perhaps pass on it. Lawrence R. Maxted, Gannon Univ., Erie, PA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc. ...". well-researched ... nicely illustrated ... a welcome contribution to a small but growing body of advertising history." About the Author Juliann Sivulka, Ph.D. (Tokyo, Japan) is the author of *Stronger Than Dirt: A Cultural History of Advertising Personal Hygiene in America, 1890 to 1940* and *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising*. She lives in Tokyo, Japan, where she is a professor of advertising and American studies at the School of International Liberal Studies of Waseda University.