Luedicke, M. K. (2011). Consumer acculturation theory: (crossing) conceptual boundaries. Consumption Markets and Culture, 14(3), pp. 223-244. doi: 10.1080/10253866.2011.574824

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

EST 1894

City Research Online

Consumer Acculturation Theory: (Crossing) Conceptual Boundaries

Marius K. Luedicke

Department of Strategic Management, Marketing and Tourism, University of Innsbruck, Innsbruck, Austria

Universitätsstr. 15, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria
Phone: +43 650 583 4253
Email: myself@mariusluedicke.de

Consumer acculturation theorists have developed an insightful body of literature about the ways in which migrants adapt to foreign cultures via consumption. The present paper revisits fourteen key studies from this field to highlight its most important contributions, critique its conceptual boundaries, and present cases of conceptual border crossings that indicate an emerging need for a broader conceptualization of the phenomenon. The paper closes with introducing a model that frames consumer acculturation as a complex system of recursive socio-cultural adaptation, and discusses its implications for future research.

Emigration to industrialized Western nations has grown significantly in recent years. Since 1980, the USA alone has taken in 12 million new legal residents (Rytina 2009) and about 10 million unauthorized immigrants (Hoefer, Rytina, and Baker 2009). The integration of individuals with different cultural backgrounds into a nation's political, legal, educational, and cultural landscape rates among the top ten current public policy concerns of many Western nations (NCSL 2008). Bets are that insufficient integration will eventually produce explosive identity conflicts (Rudmin 2003; Üstüner and Holt 2007), intra-national cultural clashes (Huntington 1993), a surge of "wasted lives" (Bauman 2004; Davis 2006), and even a demise of democracy (Barber 1995).

For migrants, border crossings typically initiate an intricate process of socio-cultural adaptation to unfamiliar economic (income, status), biological (food, health), physical (urbanization), social (family, friendships, discrimination), and cultural (clothing, religion, language) conditions that often creates significant psychological stress (Berry and Sam 1997, 5; Marsh and Sahin-Dikmen 2002; Rudmin 2009; Simons 1901; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Throughout their acculturation – i.e. "what happens to individuals, who have developed in one cultural context, when they attempt to live in a new cultural context" (Berry 1997, 5; Simons 1901; Teske Jr. and Nelson 1974) – migrants adopt either assimilation, integration, segregation, or marginalization strategies, depending on their attitudes towards original and new cultural contexts (Berry 1980; 1997). Some migrants, for instance, decide to "integrate" by maintaining ties to their original cultures while adopting some practices and beliefs of their local peers. Others "segregate" by entirely maintaining their primary socialization without adopting local cultural habits.

In the 1980s, consumer researchers became interested in exploring the complexities of migrants' adaptation to Western consumer cultures, i.e. to cultural conditions where the self is largely defined through consumption (Cross 2000). Consumer acculturation scholars Reilly

and Wallendorf (Reilly and Wallendorf 1987; Wallendorf and Reilly 1983b), Saegert, Hover, and Hilger (1985), and Desphande, Hoyer, and Donthu (1986) established the field of "consumer acculturation research" by assessing the levels of assimilation through differences in consumption choices vis-à-vis American mainstream consumers. Breaking with these authors' theory of gradual assimilation, Peñaloza (1989; 1994; 1995), Oswald (1999), and Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard (2005) established the "postassimilationist" view – that migrants' identity projects and outcomes significantly depended on their economic, social, and cultural capital, leaving some marginalized with shattered hopes and dreams (Üstüner and Holt 2007) and others assimilated to an ethnic subculture (Peñaloza 1994).

In concert, consumer acculturation research has generated a wealth of knowledge useful for theoreticians, marketers, politicians, and social activists that seek to better understand, and potentially act upon, the lifeworlds of migrant consumers under diverse socio-cultural conditions. While making their contributions, these "path-making" studies have also contoured the boundaries of consumer acculturation as a field of research. More specifically, they cumulatively suggest that consumer acculturation research revolves around theories about migrant identity projects in times of transition, about the acculturation agents that are involved in this process, and about the kinds of outcomes (e.g. integration, resistance, or pendulism) that are produced under different national-cultural conditions (e.g. in North America, Denmark, or Turkey).

The first goal of this article is to discuss how prior studies, by suggesting a bounded set of phenomena and suitable methods, constrain the realm of possibilities for future consumer acculturation research. Its second goal is to combine selected cases of conceptual boundary crossing with indexical empirical evidence from a European interpretive study to develop a broader model of consumer acculturation. This model conceptualizes consumer acculturation as a set of interdependent, consumption-mediated social phenomena that occur within complex networks of socio-cultural adaptation.

To best deliver on these goals, this paper selectively revisits fourteen influential consumer acculturation studies in the light of the conceptual boundaries that they have collectively built – by providing certain theoretical definitions of identity building and acculturation agents, and by focusing on single-sided ethnographic methods – and highlights studies that have selectively crossed these boundaries. The paper comes to a close with a discussion about an alternative model of consumer acculturation and a suggestion for the roads that future research could take.

Consumer Acculturation Theory Revisited

The field of consumer acculturation research was significantly shaped by fourteen influential studies published in *Journal of Consumer Research*, in *Consumption, Markets & Culture*, and in *Advances in Consumer Research* (i.e. Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Desphande, Hoyer, and Donthu 1986; Hirschman 1981; Lindridge, Hogg and Shah 2004; Mehta and Belk 1991; O'Guinn, Lee, and Faber 1986; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1989; 1994; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999; Saegert, Hover, and Hilger 1985; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Üstüner and Holt 2007; Wallendorf and Reilly 1983a). These studies illuminated and theorized on the actual socio-cultural and commercial dynamics that are a result of migrants moving between various (low- to high-income) social contexts. Many of these studies appear to be also interested in offering practical insights for commercial and political decision making in the interests of marginalized migrants. These publications were often inspired by sociological and psychological acculturation theory (often associated with the influential work of Berry and colleagues (Berry 1980; 1997; 2001; Berry *et al.* 1989)), but decidedly different because of their focus on consumption contexts and (later) interpretive empirical methods. The fourteen studies selected here took a leading role in the development of consumer acculturation theory by defining its phenomenological scope, its key theoretical concepts, and its most useful methods.

This consumer acculturation literature broadly follows two waves of research that are distinct in their goals and methods. In the following outline of these two waves, the term "local" will be used to describe citizens with primary socialization and a lengthy family history in the context under study, whereas "migrants" shall refer to individuals that have crossed national, social, and/or cultural borders within the span of two preceding generations.

The First Wave: Assessing Migrants' Consumption Patterns

Consumer acculturation research started as a field of study interested in exploring why consumption patterns of immigrant groups differ from those of their local peers and what these differences reveal about the immigrants' level of assimilation to a local cultural context. Wallendorf and Reilly (Reilly and Wallendorf 1987; Wallendorf and Reilly 1983b, 300), for instance, illuminated that the "consumption behavior patterns of Mexican-Americans cannot be viewed as a simple median between that of the Mexicans and that of the Anglos," as proposed by the dominant Berry model (Berry 1997), but that Mexican immigrants, who often immigrate with high hopes of personal gain, sometimes "over-assimilate" to an internalized, but outdated, Anglo-American cultural style. Mehta and Belk (1991, 408) reported an opposite, anti-assimilation effect in a comparison study of favorite possessions of highly educated, upper-middle-class Indians living in Bombay or the U.S. This insightful work revealed that their informants not only adopted American clothing, food, or furnishing styles (as predicted by the assimilation model) but also used special Indian possessions for "hyperidentification" with their native, but outdated, cultural context. Together these studies demonstrate the influence (and inertia) of imagined original (Ger and Østergaard 1998; Mehta and Belk 1991) and local (Wallendorf and Reilly 1983b) cultural styles on immigrants' über- or anti-assimilative consumption.

Building on Hirschman (1981), Desphande, Hoyer, and Donthu (1986) were among the first consumer researchers to assess behavioral differences not only between ethnic

immigrant and dominant groups but also between consumers of the same ethnic background. Desphande, Hoyer, and Donthu's (1986) insightful study demonstrates that measures of brand loyalty, attitudes towards business, or the use of media not only differ between ethnic and dominant consumers (as widely recognized in prior work) but also among ethnic consumers with different strengths of "ethnic identification." Much ethnic and immigrant consumption research published after this work no longer assessed ethnicity via socio-demographics such as consumers' country of birth, language or surname, but through self-proclaimed identification with an ethnic group.

Vis-à-vis the prevailing view in cross-cultural psychology, this first wave of consumer acculturation research demonstrated a) that the acculturation process does not follow the expected linear pattern of progressive cultural assimilation but takes "multiple, simultaneous and less direct paths" (O'Guinn, Lee, and Faber 1986, 597), b) that Berry's model of "level of acculturation" (1980; 1997, 5) ignores empirically more complex identity outcomes such as over-assimilation or hyperidentification, and c) that access to and consumption of institutional "agents of acculturation," such as American mass media, can strongly affect immigrants' assimilation paths and outcomes (O'Guinn, Lee, and Faber 1986). These important conceptual findings established the points of departure for the second wave of consumer acculturation theory.

The Second Wave: Exploring Consumer Acculturation Experiences

Peñaloza's groundbreaking work marks the beginning of the second wave of consumer acculturation studies (Peñaloza 1989). She is interested in exploring how – rather than measuring "how much" – immigrant consumers acquire the "skills and knowledge relevant to engaging in consumer behavior" (110) in a foreign cultural context. This influential study on Mexican immigrants in the United States focused on specific acculturation processes and conditions, i.e. "the environment inhabited by Mexican immigrants and what their lives were

like in the United States" (Peñaloza 1994, 36), that shaped acculturation experiences and outcomes. Using ethnographic, interpretive methods, the author meticulously described the complexities of immigrants' lives between two worlds. The study revealed that, on a functional level, her informants quickly adopted American products and services that exhibited a high rate of visibility and social acceptance – such as clothing or automobiles – and also goods and services that were best attuned to maintaining social ties, i.e. the telephone, food preparation objects, or Spanish media (Peñaloza 1994, 49). However, on a symbolic level, her participants often consumed these original American objects and services in ways reminiscent of their Mexican cultural heritage. By combining functional assimilation with cultural rejection in consumption practices, these informants managed to selectively resist the push and pull of Anglo and Mexican marketers in unprecedented ways. Peñaloza weaved these novel insights into an empirical model of consumer acculturation that turned into an important reference point for many subsequent studies.

This study not only carried consumer acculturation theory into previously unused methodological terrains (i.e. ethnographic inquiry) but also marked the field's phenomenological and conceptual scope in three important ways: first, Peñaloza (1994) conceptualized consumer acculturation as "general process of movement and adaptation to the consumer cultural environment in one country by persons from another country." Although the focus on the "general process" of movement from one environment to another echoes a general directedness suggested by traditional acculturation psychology (Berry 1997), Peñaloza argues that immigration does not necessarily lead to assimilation (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005, 161).

Second, the author maintains the focus on exploring influences from two outwardly distinct but inwardly – to a large extent – homogeneous cultural environments, the culture of origin and the culture of immigration. In this view, family, friends, media, and social and religious institutions from both cultures serve as "dual sets of acculturation agents" (49), i.e.

people and organizations that help immigrant consumers to get along and to reproduce Mexican or Anglo-American cultural norms in their new cultural context (O'Guinn, Lee, and Faber 1986; Peñaloza 1994, 35).

And third, by modeling consumer acculturation as a process that leads to either of four "consumer acculturation outcomes" (Peñaloza 1994, 48), Peñaloza echoed a traditional approach in psychology and in first wave consumer acculturation theory to assessing acculturation outcomes even though her differentiations were interpretive, not quantitative. Her consumer acculturation outcomes – assimilation, maintenance, resistance, and segregation (Peñaloza 1994, 48) – each express, like those in Berry's (1980; 1997) model, a combination of affirmative and rejectionist attitudes towards the original and foreign cultural contexts. But her Mexican immigrants' resistance to American material values and consumption practices moves beyond Berry's more passively constructed "marginalization" strategy (Peñaloza 1994). So, together with earlier consumer research findings (Mehta and Belk 1991; Wallendorf and Reilly 1983b), Peñaloza's (1994) study falsified Berry's claim for a "universalist perspective" (Berry 1997, 5; Berry and Sam 1997, 296; Rudmin 2003) by highlighting cases that were not fully captured by Berry's prevailing four-fold matrix.

Oswald's (1999, 303) research of Haitian migrants in the U.S. added another interesting aspect to the study of consumer acculturation outcomes. By studying how Haitian immigrants wear and understand clothes and accessories that they associate with their "home" or "host" culture, she illustrated the instability of acculturation outcomes, neglected by prior research (cf. Lindridge, Hogg and Shah 2004). She found that Haitian migrants used consumption to "swap" between cultures and multicultural identities, rather than to occupy fixed identity positions. Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005, 168) strengthen these theories of identity outcomes and dynamics by demonstrating that Greenlandic informants in Denmark "move between" positions of hyperculture, assimilation, integration, and pendulism. These positions, again, differ significantly from the strategies adopted by poor Mexican or

high culture Haitian immigrants in the United States. Lastly, and most recently, Üstüner and Holt (2007) described the "shattered identity projects" that Turkish migrant women experience in a squatter camp outside Ankara. As they show, this frustrating outcome results from experiencing modern (vs. postmodern) cultural conditions in which migrants without sufficient financial and social capital have no means to manifest their pre-migration imaginations of upward social mobility (Luedicke and Pichler 2010).

Oswald's (1999) study added another key conceptual element that significantly shaped subsequent consumer acculturation theory. For theoretical purposes, Oswald borrowed Berry's constructs of "home culture" and "host culture," originally created to measure an immigrant's tendency to accept or reject either of two homogeneous systems of meaning. Whereas Peñaloza (1994) referred to these realms carefully as "culture of origin" and "culture of residence" to avoid compromising on potential cultural diversity, many post-1999 studies readily adopted Oswald's dualistic home/host notation without questioning its reductionist make (see Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005 for a critique).

For better illustration, Figure 1 summarizes the central antecedents, resources, influences, and outcomes established by the existing body of consumer acculturation literature. It represents the prevalent, cumulative conceptualization of consumer acculturation as a process throughout which immigrants move from physical border crossings to consumer acculturation outcomes, drawing on acculturation agents as they go and coping with the socio-cultural conditions that they cannot control. More specifically, the figure arranges the individual migration antecedents noted by Peñaloza (1994, left boxes); the discursive elements, cultural models, and acculturation agents highlighted by Peñaloza (1994), Oswald (1999), and Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard (2005) (lower middle boxes); the broader socio-cultural conditions analyzed by Üstüner and Holt (2007), the processes and practices addressed by all authors, and the range of consumer acculturation outcomes and movements between them that researchers have identified in distinct empirical contexts (right boxes).

Importantly, the existing schematic models reflect a general directedness of acculturation processes, even though this assumption is frequently theoretically and empirically rejected.
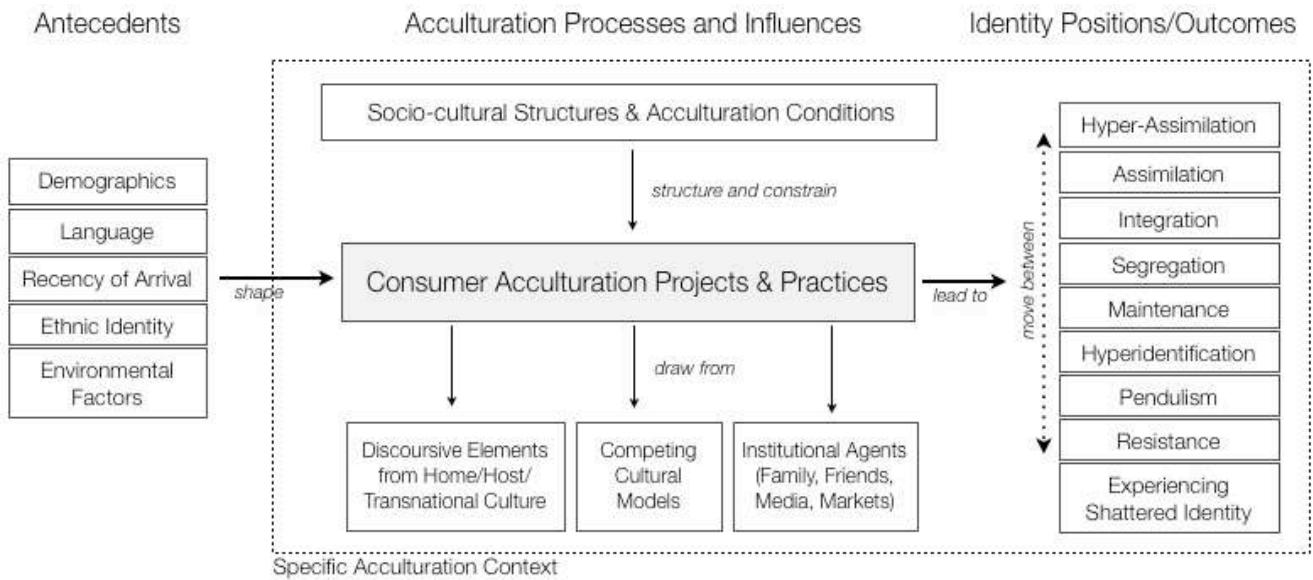

Figure 1: A synthesized model of consumer acculturation phenomena

As the above model illustrates, these influential studies have cumulatively defined the phenomenological scope of consumer acculturation theory, which concepts are key to making sense of its empirical observations, and how consumer acculturation phenomena are successfully studied. The following section discusses three influential decisions that enabled a significant theoretical progress but also raised subtle conceptual boundaries for future acculturation research projects.

The impetus to frame theoretical decisions as conceptual boundaries was fired by empirical data selected from a broader study of migrant and non-migrant consumer relations in Germany and Austria. The study collected relational narratives of participants to better understand the influences of consumption practices on inter-cultural relations. Select data from these narrations open the sections below to provide a sense of (not proof for) the social complexities that can emerge when migrants and locals compete for market-based (identity)

resources.

Conceptual Boundaries

> *Respondent: Last weekend, I drove to Munich in my 3-series BMW convertible. I went with my friends. We were listening to music [Turkish hip-hop], cruised downtown, with an open rooftop. We had a great time. Girls loved it too.*
> *Interviewer: Did you ever receive any responses from people while driving your car?*
> *R: It happened once. A couple of German guys. They look at my car and flip me off [show the middle finger] and shout, "Look at his car" or so.*
> *I: What happened then?*
> *R: I wanted to jump out of the car. My friends held me back. I would have killed him [expressed with a kind of gangster coolness]. Really. He doesn't know me, I don't know him. And he flips me off??! (Akim, 22, Germany, parents immigrated from Turkey)*

This noteworthy story told by Akim, a 22-year-old, second-generation Turkish-German, BMW enthusiast from Berlin, recounts an overt conflict between a group of German ("local" as defined above) and Turkish-German ("migrant") consumers over the locally acknowledged cultural styles of driving a BMW convertible car in Berlin. The quote points at an embedded, multi-directional, and sometimes actively contested acculturation experience. And it suggests a central role of symbolic consumption practices and brand enthusiasm for representing and developing inter- and intra-cultural relations between migrants and locals. Although the second wave of consumer acculturation research has occasionally noted such embedded experiences and interactions with locals, it has neither empirically explored nor theoretically unpacked or included them in the conceptual models of consumer acculturation. As the following sections will discuss, existing theory has – potentially owing to its conceptual boundaries – thus far paid scant attention to locals' responses to migrants' consumption behaviors; to potentially influential inter-cultural relations between migrants, other migrants, locals, and other locals; and to what happens to the identities of locals, migrants, and their brands when these diverse groups build their consumer identities on the same (symbolic)

market resources.

One: Identity Construction

> *We had been driving in the left-hand lane, but the other guy got stuck at road works in the right-hand lane. I had not seen him, nor did my friend. He honked like crazy as we drove by and he yelled at us 'Why don't you go back to Turkey'! I was soooo frustrated. It was the first time I'd heard something like that. And I'm not from Turkey. (Said, 55, Berlin, born in Iran)*

The first conceptual border concerns the question if and to what extent migrant identity construction depends on the discourses and practices in the social environment in which it occurs. The consumer acculturation literature has established a view akin to an "individual-level, voluntarist" model of identity construction (Üstüner and Holt 2007, 54). In this view, migrants can mix and match "goods to forge a new identity" up to the point where they "wear their ethnicity as a kind of garment that can be purchased, sold or discarded, or traded as the situation demands" (Oswald 1999, 314). From this perspective, mass media, extended family, peer groups, institutions, and consumption practices serve migrants as overtly available but non-agency resources for individual and group identity projects (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; O'Guinn, Lee, and Faber 1986; Peñaloza 1994).

The extent to which migrants adopt or reject certain discursive elements and cultural models from home, host, and transnational cultural contexts allows researchers to judge the "outcome" (Peñaloza 1994) of their acculturation projects, or their "identity position" (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Üstüner and Holt 2007) between two cultural systems. When prior studies specified the identity outcomes of overassimilation (Wallendorf and Reilly 1983b), hyperidentification (Mehta and Belk 1991), hyperculture, pendulism (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005), or resistance (Peñaloza 1994), they bolstered this belief that each migrant can actively select "a particular identity project from the range of discourses that are available" (Üstüner and Holt 2007, 42).

The resulting view is of an identity construction process that a) occurs largely shielded from interactions with the broader social environment and b) results in distinct and identifiable identity outcomes. This view imposes two boundaries on consumer acculturation theory.

a) Identity Construction is Conditioned

Philosophy (Sartre 1969), social identity theory (Brown, Tajfel, and Turner 1980; Tajfel and Turner 1986; Turner, Brown and Tajfel 1979), acculturation psychology (Berry 2001; Leong 2008), sociology (Nagel 1994), and consumer research (Avery 2007; Kates 2004; Schouten and McAlexander 1995; Zaltman 2000) have long established the idea that human identity can only be constructed in relation to a social environment. Sartre (1969), for instance, generally maintained that to fully realize all structures of their being, humans depend on observations of and interactions with other humans. In more specific consumer research, Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001, 419) reported that brand community members build social hierarchies through elaborate legitimization practices. They show that the outside definition of a person's "social fit with a society's or community's shared norms" (Suchman 1995, 574) constitutes an important social process "whereby members of the community differentiate between true members of the community and those who are not, or who occupy a more marginal space." The core members' granting of access to their inner circles is similarly bound to a stereotypical construction of roles, – a typical newcomer, or a fan of the oppositional brand – and how members of the community relate to them (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001). The human use of stereotypes is also important for acculturation theory because such shared beliefs of others that build and "simultaneously disavow or mask" (Bhabha 2004, 110) socio-cultural differences can significantly affect consumers' acculturation projects.

Acculturation psychologists Nesdale and Mak (2000, 483) address this issue by measuring the main drivers of identification with the host culture for migrant groups.

Collecting data from six migrant groups in Australia, they diagnosed that host country identification is firstly driven by the immigrants' attitudes towards the local culture and society, but secondly and thirdly "by the degree of acceptance by members of the dominant cultural group [and] the success immigrants experience in the new country." In effect, their participants' host culture identification significantly depended on "the extent [to which migrants] feel accepted and welcomed as new members of the community, particularly by members of the dominant cultural group" (cf. Leong 2008; Ward and Masgoret 2006). Ruggiero, Taylor, and Lambert (1996) explained that, in consequence, discrimination by locals in public settings, job markets, housing markets, and dealings with the police significantly leverage migrants' tendencies to maintain their cultural heritage.

This interdependency of migrant identity construction, local stereotypes, and attitudes towards immigrants did not go unnoticed in consumer acculturation theory. Peñaloza (1995, 89), for instance, acknowledged that a "significant part of the informants' consumer acculturation processes entailed learning who they were and how they were valued in the United States system" and that learning "one's place in society, that is, how people see each other and attribute membership in particular social categories, was an integral part of consumer acculturation" (Peñaloza 1994, 47). Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005, 163) reported on a different outcome of external identity construction. One Greenlandic immigrant in Denmark complained in their interview about getting "a little tired of all these Greenlanders" that were (for her) unwilling or unable to adopt to Danish professionalism as well as she did. The informant perceived collaboration with such compatriots as "kind of a job", i.e. an additional, potentially avoidable, and tiring part of her work.

Yet, even though such cases of conflict-laden social interactions have been reported in prior studies, their potential influence on consumers' acculturation projects were not explored or considered relevant enough for inclusion in consumer acculturation models. Yet if acculturation is indeed a process of give and take to a greater or lesser degree (Simons 1901;

Teske Jr. and Nelson 1974) and, thus, a multi-directional process of socio-cultural adaptation, a focus on identity building that depends mainly on migrants' emerging attitudes towards migrant and local cultural habits but not on actual social interactions with local peers may capture only one side of a broader, multi-sided system of influences. As in the above case of Akim, Jafari and Goulding's (2008) inspiring research on the "torn self" of Iranian immigrants in the UK suggests that migrant identity construction is also perhaps less voluntary than previously suggested.

b) Identity Outcomes are Contingent upon Context and Perspective

The theoretical focus on identity outcomes perpetuates, in part, the traditional psychology of the acculturation framework made popular by social psychologist Berry and his colleagues. Consumer acculturation researchers added important qualitative nuances to their quantitative measures without, however, abandoning its general logic of determining an identity position (i.e. assessed by a predominance of beliefs, values, and consumption practices) somewhere between migrant and local cultural contexts.

Historically, the psychologists' search for identity outcomes was motivated by the desire to understand which acculturation strategy was the least stressful for migrants and, thus, to provide guidance for political decision making (Berry 1980; 1997; 2001; Rudmin 2007). However, this project has, despite significant efforts, failed to produce consistent results (Boski 2008; Rudmin 2003; 2007).

According to Rudmin's (2007) sweeping critique in "Acculturation Alchemy," acculturation psychologists have frequently misread and ignored prior findings in an attempt to establish the potentially morally privileged outcome of integration as the least stressful. In fact, acculturation "outcomes" are difficult to measure with quantitative methods since their evaluation is – as consumer acculturation theorists have demonstrated – largely contingent

upon specific contexts (see Rudmin 2007 for a critique) and it may be different for the different roles that consumers adopt (see Jun et al. 1994 for a review). Lastly, the level of acculturation stress is, according to various authors, more dependent on situational factors such as job opportunities or media exposure than on a-priori attitudes towards migrant or local cultures (Jafari and Goulding 2008; Jamal and Chapman 2000; Lindridge, Hogg and Shah 2004; Seelye and Brewer 1970; Üstüner and Holt 2007).

First and second wave consumer acculturation researchers introduced various identity outcomes in extension of the Berry model (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Mehta and Belk 1991; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994; Üstüner and Holt 2007; Wallendorf and Reilly 1983b). But they have seldom focused on the psychological or communal favorability of these outcomes; nor have they developed implications for political or social remediation as suggested by Jun and colleagues (1994). If acculturation outcomes cannot be seen as having more or less favorable results at individual and community levels, how can the continued search for yet another context-specific identity outcome be both theoretically and practically useful? Üstüner and Holt (2007, 55) and Jafari and Goulding (2008) recently demonstrated that the search for identity outcomes yields important theoretical and practical insights if 1) such outcomes frequently appear under similar (but not unique) bundles of socio-cultural conditions, and 2) they can reasonably be linked with individual and social identity consequences. More precisely, Üstüner and Holt revealed that rural Turkish migrants to suburban Turkish squatters experienced "shattered identity projects" under dominated, modern cultural conditions and argued that these frustrations may eventually turn into collective resistance against the dominant class (as witnessed before in the Paris *banlieue* or the Burnley race riots).

Another important difference in Üstüner and Holt's (2007) and Jafari and Goulding's (20008) theorizing is that they highlight identity conflicts that are not defined by the migrants' level of acceptance or rejection of contextual cultural models, but by the level of fulfillment

of their individual aspirations, hopes, and morals. When migrants experience, for instance, a "torn self" (Jafari and Goulding 2008), they are (sometimes temporarily) betwixt and between opposing morals, public policies, religious prescriptions, and popular discourses that make it difficult for them to find a suitable way of consuming certain objects. For instance, wearing the veil is an option for Iranian women in the UK rather than a duty, as in Iran. This alone produces for these informants a troubling need to make a decision. But wearing a veil is also often associated with Islamic terrorism, adding further complexity to the identity issue. A "shattered identity project" (Üstüner and Holt 2007), in turn, appears when migrants cannot access sufficient economic, cultural, and social capital to live up to their socio-cultural aspirations. Such identity conflicts appear largely unrelated to the migrants' original attitude towards UK's religious freedom, or Iran's religious prescriptions, so that these momentary identity positions need to be assessed on a different scale.

Thus far, few consumer acculturation studies have chosen to explore specific, but globally paralleled, sets of economic, social, and cultural conditions in the mode that Üstüner and Holt (2007) propose and to show how they evoke, more than other conditions, certain identity conflicts that deserve public attention. Existing theory did also not sufficiently address how local citizens perceive the acculturation efforts and outcomes of migrants and respond to their evaluations in certain ways.

Two: Acculturation Agents

> *In the Schauplatz [a news show on Austrian television] an older lady from our village was interviewed walking her dog on a street close to our mosque. She said something like "You see? Not even my dog likes the Turks!" I was baffled ... I know this woman. My 5-year-old plays with her dog almost every day!! ... Maybe the ORF has paid her for saying that? I would have paid her more for not saying that. It was so frustrating! (Erkan, 35, Austria, parents immigrated from Turkey)*

The second conceptual boundary concerns the idea, scope, and theoretical use of "consumer

acculturation agents" (Peñaloza 1994) as a core concept for addressing the social "forces involved in the consumer acculturation process" (O'Guinn, Lee, and Faber 1986, 579). Acculturation agents were originally defined as "those individuals or institutions who serve as sources of consumer information and/or models of consumption behavior" (Peñaloza 1989, 116), including family, peers, mass media, schools, churches, and companies. Immigrants draw from two distinct sets of such agents – "home" and "host" (Oswald 1999) – when they adapt to foreign cultural conditions (Berry and Sam 1997; Peñaloza 1994). In their 2005 study, Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard challenged the dualistic home/host construction of acculturation agents by demonstrating that cultural discourses and models from "transnational consumer culture" also serve immigrants as socio-cultural templates, thus constituting a third set of acculturation agents. This and other (e.g. Jafari and Goulding 2008) theoretical findings suggest that each micro-cultural context under study provides another combination of social discourses and cultural practices that influence how migrants come to see themselves and their relations to diverse social peers.

The theoretical merits of this broad conceptualization of acculturation agents rest undisputed. However, the definition of acculturation agents as a largely passive and robust set of discourses (or systems of meaning) could a) direct attention away from exploring interactions with peers and narratives that actively exert agency on migrants – i.e. which are self-motivated, potentially self-interested, and not always supportive, and b) exhibit a tendency to essentialize "home" and "host" cultures as stable systems of meaning that remain unaffected by migrants' consumption discourse and practices rather than as emergent social constructions (Nagel 1994). By broadening the category of acculturation agents to include, for instance, cultural models of time, space, having, being, and consuming (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005), acculturation theorists c) complicated the task of capturing and theoretically differentiating other types of acculturation influences, that are not "agents" in a strict sense and influence acculturation in different ways.

Ad a) Agents are Active Influencers

Parsons and Bales (1955, 191) originally define "socialization agents" as parents, peers, and social institutions that play a forming role in a child's socialization process. These individuals or collectivities are full participants "of *both* the relevant interaction systems," interact directly with the socializing person and the social environment, and have a certain degree of control of the (child's) socialization process. This definition renders the socialization agent as a significant and dominant individual (or group) that exerts strong direct influences on the socialization outcomes (Dollard and Miller 1950; Parsons and Bales 1955, 192) and who potentially follows their own (educational) agenda.

In line with this original idea, consumer acculturation researchers have explored not only the interactions of migrants with close relatives and other social peers from the migrant subculture (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994) but also with "ethnic" marketers that participate in both interaction systems (Peñaloza and Gilly 1999). These individuals and groups explain, guide, support, and set examples for migrants interactively, just like Parson and Bales' socialization agents. But many studies following Peñaloza (1994, 39 and 46) rely exclusively on ethnographic accounts from conversations and observations of migrant cultures and beliefs. From Peñaloza's set of informants, for instance, only three participants "had sustained contact with Anglo-Americans at their job site" and none reported sustained social contact with Anglo-American social peers.

Consequently, in consumer research the role of acculturation agents, and particularly those that do not seek to facilitate positive intercultural relations, remains largely under-addressed. Indexical evidence from many consumer acculturation contexts suggests that co-workers, the sales personnel of local supermarkets, direct neighbors, fellow brand enthusiasts, and other outside individuals and groups may affect migrant consumers' acculturation experiences as much as close friends, family, and school peers noted in previous studies. But they likely exert influence in different (sometimes more subtle) ways. As the above quote

suggests, random social observers sometimes reveal their attitudes about migrants and their (BWM) consumption so bluntly that migrants' attitudes towards local individuals and how much they should be imitated is not likely to remain unchanged.

An alternative, more limited, but more precise view of the acculturation agent as a theoretical concept would concern the active, agentic influences of human beings and organizations that often impose their beliefs and values upon migrants. Such human agents do not necessarily need to be supportive and friendly as the close social peers that were previously recognized as agents, nor are their personal views independent from those of migrants. More likely, migrants and their (unsolicited) human acculturation agents are enmeshed in recursive webs of behaviors, observations, evaluations, and responses that change the attitudes, values, and consumption behaviors of all parties involved (Bhatia 2002; Jamal and Chapman 2000).

Ad b) Agents are Dynamic and Complex

Consumer acculturation research typically squarely anchors migration phenomena as movements between two distinct and apparently homogeneous cultures. Following the social-psychological research tradition (Berry 1997), Wallendorf and Reilly (1983b) use the term "host society" (vs. society of immigration), and in so doing imply that host citizens and institutions (and researchers) perceive migrants through cultural models associated with being a "host", i.e. promoting a welcoming, caring attitude towards a guest and a temporary granting of extra-ordinary rights and appreciation. The authors also entrench the concept of "dominant culture" which emphasizes, even more than the model of a host culture, the presence of power imbalances and social differences.

This conceptualization has attracted severe criticism. Rudmin (2009), for instance, condemned the use of these summary notions for exhibiting a "colonialistic subtext," Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005, 162) criticized the reification of "census-style

ethnic categories," and Al-Azmeh (1993) charged these authors for promoting "culturalism," i.e. a stereotypical condensation of a more complex, multifaceted system of different cultures into "one culture." Even though this theoretical culturalism has proven useful for modeling consumer acculturation processes, such a condensation of diverse geo-political spheres, racial differences, local (sub-) cultures, and historicized social systems into two distinct "cultures" also produces problems (and opportunities) for subsequent theorists. The potential consequences for consumer acculturation theory are four-fold.

First, focusing on "culture" in the traditional sense of a largely "homogenous system of collectively shared meanings, ways of life, and unifying values shared by a member of society" (see Arnould and Thompson 2005, 869 for a critique) suggests a potentially outdated degree of structural and ideological stability. It also seduces researchers to essentialize a cultural system as naturally given, rather than historically build and contingent. The focus on the home/host dualism also takes away the possibility that migrants and locals acculturate not less to a national "host culture" with its dominant attitudes, values, and norms (cf. Berry 2001; Jun et al. 1994; Singh and Hu 2001; Thompson and Tambyah 1999) but more to multiple localized or virtual (sub-) cultures that dynamically change as consumerist fashions come and go. In the alternative view, cultural adaptation can occur without crossing national borders, while crossing national borders can appear without a need for adaptation. Whereas Turkish migrants can encounter insurmountable socio-cultural barriers within their own country (Üstüner and Holt 2007), cosmopolitan techno music enthusiasts or surfers may cross national boundaries almost without leaving their subcultural system (Canniford 2005; D'Andrea 2009; Deleuze and Guattari 2000). Differentiating Mexican from Anglo-American, Greenlandish from Danish, or Iranian from UK "culture" is, of course, useful for the purposes of these studies, but also potentially misleading if it comes to transferring insights to other contexts or deriving marketing or public policy implications.

As Sandıkcı and Ger (2010), Ger and Østergaard (1998), and Wamwara-Mbugua and

colleagues (2008) show, migrants not only acculturate to the predominant social and cultural norms but also to distinct social, religious, or ethnic subcultures which are their primary social "landing points" (Graves 1967). Ger and Østergaard (1998, 9), for instance, argue that their Turko-Danish student participants engage in many subcultures of Odense, Denmark. "These consumers neither behave alike nor do they simply adapt or resist. They negotiate and mix different styles of clothing depending on the situation and the people around them. Degrees of assimilation/adaptation, resistance/persistence, and hybridization/synthesis vary within one person depending on the context."

This multiplicity of potential (sub-) cultural identifications seems to deserve more attention in order to better understand the conditions under which certain cultural and social realms appear to be attractive targets for integration and assimilation (e.g. a local economic system, soccer league, or BMW brand community), whereas others (e.g. a local drinking culture, or a materialist lifestyle) evoke segregation or marginalization behaviors. Social psychologists working in the tradition of psychology (vs. sociology) typically tend to gloss over these complexities by focusing on quantitative acculturation outcomes in the dualistic scheme (see Rudmin 2003). Second wave consumer acculturation theory is significantly more context-sensitive, but risks falling prey to distortive methical abstractions when adopting such constructs.

Secondly, the prevailing consumer acculturation models have not differentiated the levels of social integration and the respective acculturation opportunities and barriers that they entail for migrants. For example, in most studies, migrant consumers seem to learn quickly how to master basic provision and consumption tasks in their new cultural context (Peñaloza 1994). However, it appears that they find it more challenging to become accustomed to the legal, educational, religious, and political spheres of these societies. Understanding the multiple overlapping cultural meanings, values, practices, social relations, and (consumerist) subcultures that characterize and organize a postmodern consumer society appears to be quite

difficult even for cosmopolitans with high cultural capital (Appadurai 1996; Arnould and Thompson 2005; Fuchs 2001; Hannerz 1996). In effect, migrants may consider themselves fully integrated into a certain realm while locals may still see them as foreign and non-integrated (Ger and Østergaard 1998).

Thirdly, consumer acculturation research has documented how poor migrants play with high status goods (e.g. make-up) associated with the consumerist lifestyle to which they aspire (Üstüner and Holt 2007). But owing to the definition of acculturation agents as models, discourses, people, or institutions, prior theory has remained rather silent about what happens to intercultural relations when migrants actively and conspicuously consume and culturally redefine the complex symbolic meanings of market-based identity resources such as shopping locations, neighborhoods, or sacrosanct local brands. For migrants, using sophisticated fashion brands, for instance, in a way that produces the intended status effects in the foreign cultural context (unlike in the BMW example above) may require yet another level of semiotic literacy and consumerist skill that has not yet been explored in acculturation theory. Matters become even more complicated if these systems of meaning are recursively adapted in response to migrants' status-seeking consumption practices (e.g. some German respondents claim to avoid buying the older 3-series BMW models for their "Turk car" image).

Fourth and lastly, establishing home or host culture as an almost robust collection of values, beliefs, and practices directs the empirical gaze away from the postmodern fluidity of Western cultures (Bauman 2000) that now change at unprecedented rates (Fuchs 2001). Acknowledging what Luhmann (1995) calls the "re-entry" of the distinction into the system – a mechanism through which a social system reflects upon its own boundaries – it appears particularly relevant for consumer researchers to study not only how and why migrant and local consumers adopt to changing cultural meanings and consumption practices but also how they mutually affect these meanings and practices under consideration of their specific inter-cultural relations (Cross 2000; Fuchs 2001).

Ad c) Non-Agentic Influences Matter too

The introductory quote of this section implies that (negative) mass media communications can significantly alter habitual relations between migrants and locals by evoking and reproducing the derogatory cultural stereotype of the disliked Turkish immigrant. By focusing mainly on close human and distant cultural agents (e.g. friends, family, home/host culture), the existing body of literature has sacrificed some of the potential of identifying more distant human, and non-cultural acculturation forces and how they affect acculturation experiences. Prior theory demonstrates that, for instance, particular intergroup relations (Berry 2001; Ward and Masgoret 2006), different perceived distances between migrant and local cultural systems (Jafari and Goulding 2008; Jun et al. 1994), occupational opportunities (Simon 2009), changing associations with traditional apparel (Sandıkcı and Ger 2010), social status and mobility options (Mehta and Belk 1991), gender ideals (Özçaglar-Toulouse and Peñaloza 2010), and brand-specific consumption practices (Luedicke and Giesler 2009) are also key to acculturation processes. These aspects constitute non-agentic, systemic forms of influences that potentially affect acculturation experiences in important ways.

Oswald (1999), for instance, recognized that local and ethnic goods are used as resources for migrant identity construction, but does not dig deeper to show that these objects and their meanings are often also resources for local consumers' identity construction. The above BMW-related encounter shows how a migrant's "culture shopping" (Oswald 1999) does not evoke a robust brand meaning. Rather, through mutual observation and adaptation, the meaning of the BMW brand recursively adapts to the meanings added by migrant and local brand enthusiasts. A conceptual disentangling of the diverse human, symbolic, or material acculturation agents that exist in specific contexts may help to bring to the surface such potentially important effects and allow for a better understanding of the role of (unwillingly) shared consumption resources for multi-directional cultural adaptation.

Three: Single-Perspective Theories

> *In the 3-series BMW coupé that I drive [a model which appears to be most frequently driven by young Turks] I quite often get funny looks and stupid lines from friends, like "Hey, nice Turk car!" But I got it from my mother, so how could I complain? (Field notes, Christian, 31, Germany)*

The above noted conceptual boundaries are firmly connected to the use of single-sided (not sited) ethnography as a dominant method for interpretive consumer acculturation research. All leading interpretive consumer acculturation studies considered here are built on in-depth empirical accounts concerning the beliefs, values, behaviors, and experiences of one group of migrants, their families, and their direct social networks. Using a wealth of ethnographic methods, consumer researchers were able to evoke informants' acculturation experiences and, sometimes, how they developed over time. However, since these methods produced accounts solely of the migrants' perspective, identity outcomes cannot be assessed other than by researchers comparing the informants' implicit or explicit attitudes and behaviors with extant social theory and their own internalized knowledge about Danish, American, or urban Turkish cultures.

This methodological approach entails broadly established advantages for acculturation research, but also has two potential problems. First, the interviewers are typically firmly invested in the "dominant culture" and themselves convey high cultural capital and academic credentials. As Ger and Østergaard (1998, 3) have noted in their methodological context, the status of the interviewer can discourage participants from talking freely about controversial intercultural experiences and latent conflicts if they are "sensitive to their status as immigrants and wanted to impress an older Turkish professor as bona fide Turks who are at the same time modern and well-adjusted TurkoDanes." And second, this approach also means that the researchers – who themselves typically have migrant or local primary socializations – largely take their own (local) culture for granted rather than empirically exploring how other local citizens interpret and react to migrants' acculturation experiences. In consequence,

researchers have built a migrant-centric, single-sided (though multi-sited) theory of consumer acculturation. As the above data excerpts suggest, however, a multi-perspective empirical approach may reveal a set of "Doppelgänger" (Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006) identities for locals, migrants, and brands that produce more or less subtle tensions in the everyday social interactions of these groups.

A single-perspective ethnography is also not perfectly suited for illuminating how legitimacy is granted and acculturation efforts are constrained by local consumers, advertisements, politics, or business representatives. Certainly, the discourses and practices that migrants observe, and thus can reiterate in interviews, are key to understanding acculturation experiences, but empirically exploring how local citizens invest resources and narratives to construct certain views of "the nation's 'other' " (Peñaloza 1994, 32) is equally important for understanding how these others subtly construe the boundaries of migrant acculturation.

The above example of the Turkish-German BMW enthusiast reveals that the informant is, from his perspective, firmly integrated into the German society. He has a secure job, drives a high status Bavarian car, and still maintains cultural ties with expatriate Turkish culture. From the outside perspective, however, the same migrant seems to be construed as an almost ridiculous figure that tries to impress others but fails to fully understand and correctly imitate German consumer symbolism. From the perspective of these outside identity constructions, the "integrated" diagnosis of this informant begins to appear as more contingent upon the observer than previously accounted for.

This empirical focus may have come about because of consumer acculturation theory's roots in the paradigm of quantitative migration psychology (see above), and because traditionally, consumer culture theory often draws its insights from anthropology-inspired in-depth accounts (Arnould and Thompson 2005). In line with the early Berry model (1980), consumer acculturation models approach and represent their cases from the perspective of a

migrant that arrives with certain cultural, social, and economic capital, engages in acculturation practices, and arrives at certain identity outcomes under certain conditions. However, unlike Berry's more recent and more complex work (Berry 2001, 617), consumer acculturation theory continues to largely neglect outside social influences, shared consumption resources, and the complexities of adaptation to different social systems and sub-cultural groups within a foreign social environment. Nevertheless, ethnographic methods, and particularly the interactive ethnographic approach promoted by Canniford (2005), are perfectly suited to explore and disentangle these multi-directional complexities (cf. Jamal and Chapman 2000; Leong 2008).

Boundary Crossings

The above section has discussed how fourteen key studies on consumer acculturation have advanced the knowledge on consumer cultural adaptation, and, in so doing, shaped the boundaries of this important field of research. It has been argued that by suggesting migrant identity construction as being largely voluntary, by theorizing acculturation agents as under-complex and robust, and by focusing on single-sided ethnographic accounts, these studies have not yet sufficiently investigated how and to what extent consumer acculturation occurs within reflexive and mutually influential networks of socio-cultural adaptation. As Chrikov (2009, 87) notes in another context, it "is widely accepted in the literature that this [psychological] form of social psychology considers individuals and their intra-subjective experiences of sociality as basic units of social psychological analyses (ignoring the role of the inter-subjectively created symbolic forms and meanings that regulate people's actions)." The "psychological social psychology" approach to acculturation studies promoted by Berry and colleagues (1980; 1997) appears to have been influential in the history of consumer acculturation theory. Therefore, this body of literature has largely neglected the more systemic market-, society-, and consumption-related aspects that together define a specific "culture of migration" in any given context of study.

If one shared goal of consumer acculturation theory is to understand and conceptualize the various forces that define, allow, facilitate, or complicate consumer acculturation under specific cultural conditions, and to provide empirical insights for progressive social change, it appears useful to approach consumer acculturation from a perspective that crosses the above boundaries.

Ideally, such alternative frameworks inspire consumer researchers to explore the reflexive interactions between local and migrant groups that compete for (or share) consumption spaces, services, objects, symbols, and natural resources (Appadurai 1996); to illuminate the ways in which outside social observers construct ideological spheres of legitimacy for migrants and establish a specific culture of (im)migration; and to study how migrants and locals weave market resources into these discourses and practices. The model would also inspire researchers to specifically explore which consumer behaviors facilitate and which inhibit intercultural adaptation (Berry 2001; Bouchet 1996), and how migrants and locals respond to uplifting and frustrating social experiences that emerge when consuming sacrosanct brands and symbols of the other group.

The existing body of literature features two important studies that have ignored the predominant model and tried alternative approaches. Thompson and Tambyah (1999, 238), for one, abandoned the Berry tradition by adopting a post-structuralist mode of analysis (cf. Foucault and Gordon 1980). Rather than exploring outcomes, these authors illuminated how highly skilled professional migrants construct "cosmopolitan" identities from narratives of traveling and dwelling, and between ideals of nomadic mobility and cultural adaptability. This study revealed a spectrum of countervailing discourses that guide consumer identity constructions in such contexts (i.e. well-educated, professional, high cultural capital, temporary migrants), thus acknowledging the contingency of momentary outcomes (see Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005, Lindridge, Hogg and Shah 2004). Üstüner and Holt (2007) deviate partially from the standard model by focusing on a pervasive socio-

cultural pattern rather than on culture-specific acculturation agents. This study yields important insights about how certain socio-cultural patterns limit the development of migrants living in such contexts anywhere on the planet. These studies provide useful directions for an alternative conceptualization of consumer acculturation and suggest alternative paths for future research.
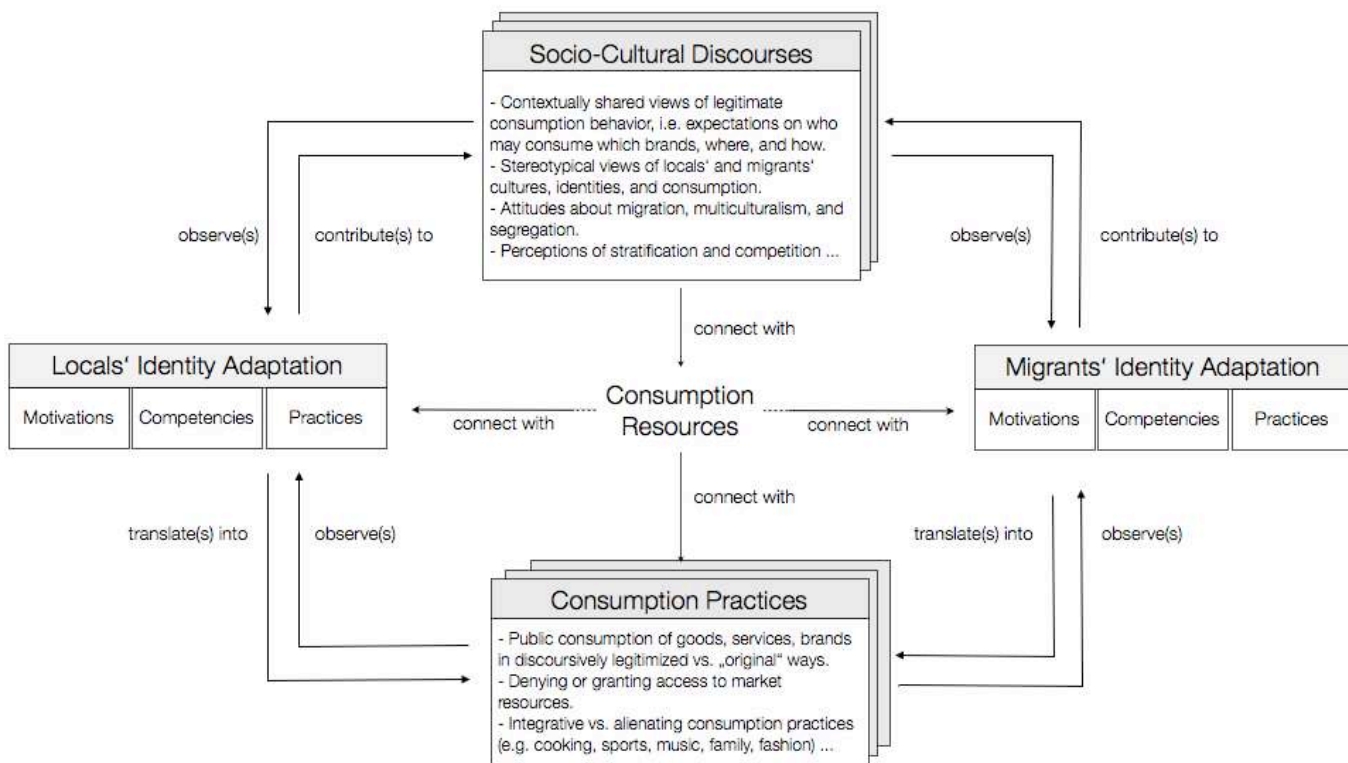

Figure 2. A model of recursive consumer cultural adaptation to migration.

The model of recursive consumer cultural adaptation presented in Figure 2 that results from the above review and critique is one step on the way to rethinking consumer acculturation. It no longer conceptualizes the phenomenon as a single-sided process of acquiring consumerist skills and knowledge (Peñaloza 1989, 110) but as a set of migration- and consumption-related discourses and practices of adaptation that emerge between multiple stakeholders within a larger social system (cf. Sandıkcı and Ger 2010, Lindridge, Hogg and Shah 2004).

In this alternative model, consumer acculturation concerns the socio-cultural discourses, consumption practices, and resources that affect how locals and migrants construct their identities in a circle of mutual observation, translation, and recreation of discourses and practices (symbolized by the outer arrows). Rather than adopting an individualist or in-group-centric perspective, this model focuses on co-constitutive social relations mediated by consumption and communication (recall the effects of brand usage and media reports in data cited above). Following Thompson and Tambyah (1999), the model proposes to explore socio-cultural discourses within a given (and ideally typical) social context which are partly shared by migrants and locals and span a range of identities from socially legitimized to transgressive..For example, most industrialized societies have cemented discourses of multiculturalism and integration into their constitutions, political programs, moral norms, and brands. But they also produce more local and ephemeral, but nonetheless influential discourses of xenophobia, segregation, and discrimination (Marsh and Sahin-Dikmen 2002) that affect the cultural adaptation system (see upper boxes).

The model equally highlights the importance of studying consumption behaviors of migrants and locals that translate these discourses into practices (lower boxes). Such socio-cultural discourses may evoke flourishing fair trade systems, ethnic stores and restaurants, multicultural festivals and alike, but can also be manifest as segregationist and actively xenophobic consumption behaviors that reiterate classic trickle-down and status emulation dynamics (McCracken 1986; Veblen 1927 [1899]) (Üstüner and Holt 2010).

Together, these migration-related discourses and practices may define the boundaries of "legitimate" consumption behavior and access for certain groups in specific social contexts (consider a new night club that bounces customers that are not part of the targeted group) and hence affect the acculturation motivations, competencies, and practices of migrants and locals. In this view, "outcomes" are of interest only as momentary diagnoses for broader inter-cultural relations (not individual positions) in specific contexts. Such outcomes provide an

impetus to study the discourses and practices that have produced these specific inter-group constellations, to ask whether these constellations also exist elsewhere, and how they could be addressed to better ends. It is important to scale up the diagnosis of outcomes to the group level because individual observers are likely to evaluate the inter-cultural relations between themselves and others quite differently depending on their own position and situation (Chrikov 2009; Ruggiero, Taylor, and Lambert 1996). Hence, acculturation outcome measures are likely more reliable (and meaningful) at a group level than at an individual level.

Lastly, since this alternative conceptualization no longer models acculturation as a progressive, directed process of culture learning but as a circular system of mutual observation and adaptation, cultural adaptation is no longer a question of voluntary decision-making but is rather an inescapable fact for all parties. The globalizing consumer cultures thrive on constant change, innovation, fashion, and variation (Bauman 2000), and migrants and locals become co-producers of meanings and practices that affect brand meanings, and the social desirability of goods (Sandıkcı and Ger 2010). Relevant to this view is not the specific path or identity outcome but the specific corridors of possibility and what constitutes them (see Üstüner and Holt 2007).

By shedding light on these important aspects, this study hopes to inspire future acculturation researchers to cross conceptual boundaries and explore why a predominant form of immigrant social organization is the encapsulated, isolated subculture that exists at a safe distance to the surrounding society (Davis 2006; Peñaloza 1994, 46; Üstüner and Holt 2007); why migrant consumers are more often than not construed as a "stigmatized, subordinate group" (see Peñaloza 1994, 47); how locals consume to integrate, elude, or discredit migrant consumers; how a potential competition for sacrosanct brands, places, and objects affects inter-cultural relations; and what kind of consumption practices may facilitate rather than complicate understanding and interaction between local and migrant groups.

Conclusion

A review of fourteen influential studies on consumer acculturation revealed a wealth of significant knowledge concerning the experiences of, and conditions for, peoples that have crossed national or cultural borders. It underlined the merits of the prevailing approach to study consumer acculturation but also critiqued how certain conceptualizations of identity, acculturation agents and immigration contexts raised subtle boundaries for future consumer acculturation studies. Building on the critique, the paper discussed an alternative model that crosses these conceptual boundaries by imagining migrant and local consumers as enmeshed in a complex, recursive system of cultural adaptation.

Cultural adaptation has turned into a ubiquitous phenomenon, driven by dynamic narratives of innovation, novelty, style, culture, and perfection. As these narratives of change travel with millions of consumers to the most distant social spheres and produce all sorts of problems and opportunities (Appadurai 1996; Bauman 2004), consumer acculturation researchers are called upon to reveal how and why certain socio-cultural discourses, market resources, and consumption practices evoke certain motivations, competencies, and practices of inter-cultural adaptation under certain cultural conditions. Their findings can yield inspiring theoretical contributions and significant insights for progressive social change.

Marius K. Luedicke studied Marketing and Business Information Technology at the Westfälische Wilhelms Universität Muenster, Germany. After working in the U.S.A. and Switzerland, he earned his Ph.D. from the University of St. Gallen (HSG) for developing a social systems theory of marketing. Marius currently works as an assistant professor at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, and as an interim Professor of Marketing at the University of Witten/Herdecke, Germany. His research explores dynamic and conflictual aspects of contemporary consumer culture through a social systemic analytical lens.

References

Al-Azmeh, A. 1993. *Islams and modernities*. London: Verso.

Appadurai, A. 1996. *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions in globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Arnould, E.J. and C.J. Thompson. 2005. Consumer culture theory (cct): Twenty years of research. Journal of Consumer Research 32, no. 4: 868-83.

Askegaard, S., E.J. Arnould and D. Kjeldgaard. 2005. Postassimilationist ethnic consumer research: Qualifications and extensions. Journal of Consumer Research 32, no. 1: 160-70.

Avery, J. 2007. Saving face by making meanig: The negative effects of consumers' self-serving response to brand extension. Harvard Business School.

Barber, B.R. 1995. *Jihad vs. McWorld*. New York: Times Books. http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/199203/barber

Bauman, Z. 2000. *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge, UK: Blackwell.

Bauman, Z. 2004. *Wasted lives. Modernity and its outcasts*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Berry, J.W. 1980. Acculturation as adaptation. In *Acculturation: Theory, models, and some new findings*, ed. Padilla, Am. Boulder: Westview Press.

Berry, J.W. 1997. Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. Applied Psychology: An International Review 46, no. 1: 5-68.

Berry, J.W. 2001. A psychology of immigration. Journal of Social Issues 57, no. 3: 615-31.

Berry, J.W., U. Kim, S. Power, M. Young and M. Bujaki. 1989. Acculturation attitudes in plural societies. Applied Psychology: An lnternational Review 38: 185-206.

Berry, J.W. and D. Sam. 1997. Acculturation and adaptation. In *Handbook of cross-cultural psychology: Social behavior and applications*, eds Berry, Jw, Seagull, Mh and Kagitcibasi, C, 291-326. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bhabha, H.K. 2004. *The location of culture*. New York: Routledge. (Orig. pub. 1994.)

Bhatia, S. 2002. Acculturation, dialogical voices and the construction of the diasporic self. Theory & Psychology 12, no. 1: 55-77.

Boski, P. 2008. Five meanings of integration in acculturation research. International Journal of Intercultural Relations 32, no. 2: 142–53.

Bouchet, D. 1996. Marketing and the redefinition of ethnicity. In *Marketing in a multicultural world*, eds Costa, Ja and Bamossy, G, 68-90. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

Brown, R.J., H. Tajfel and J. Turner. 1980. Minimal group situations and inter-group discrimination - comments. European Journal of Social Psychology 10, no. 4: 399-414.

Canniford, R. 2005. Moving shadows: Suggestions for ethnography in globalised cultures. Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal 8, no. 2: 204-18.

Chrikov, V. 2009. Introduction to the special issue on critical acculturation psychology. International Journal of Intercultural Relations 33, no. 2: 87-93.

Cross, G. 2000. *An all-consuming century: Why commercialism won in modern america*. New York: Columbia University Press.

D'Andrea, A. 2009. *Global nomads: Techno and new age as transnational countercultures in ibiza (spain) and goa (india)*: Chapman & Hall.

Davis, M. 2006. *Planet of the slums*. London: Verso.

Deleuze, G. and F. Guattari. 2000. *A thousand plateaus. Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minesota Press.

Desphande, R., W.D. Hoyer and N. Donthu. 1986. The intensity of ethnic affiliation: A study of the sociology of hispanic consumption. Journal of Consumer Research 13, no. September: 214-20.

Dollard, J. and N.E. Miller. 1950. *Personality and psychotherapy - an analysis in terms of learning, thinking and culture* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Foucault, M. and C. Gordon eds. 1980. *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977.* Hemel Hempstead, U.K.: Harvester/Wheatsheaf.

Fuchs, S. 2001. *Against essentialism - a theory of culture and society.* Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press.

Ger, G. and P. Østergaard. 1998. Constucting immigrant identities in consumption: Appearance among the turko-danes. In *Advances in Consumer Research*, eds Alba, Jw and Hutchinson, Jw, 48-52. Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.

Graves, T.D. 1967. Psychological acculturation in a tri-ethnic community. South-Western Journal of Anthropology 23: 337–50.

Hannerz, U. 1996. *Transnational connections: Culture, people, places.* London: Routledge.

Hirschman, E.C. 1981. American jewish ethnicity: Its relationship to some selected aspects of consumer behavior. Journal of Consumer Research 45, no. 3: 102-10.

Hoefer, M., N. Rytina and B.C. Baker. 2009. Estimates of the unauthorized immigrant population residing in the united states: January 2009: Office of Immigration Statistics.

Huntington, S.P. 1993. The clash of civilizations. Foreign Affairs 72, no. 3: 22-49.

Jafari, A. and C. Goulding. 2008. "we are not terrorists!" uk-based iranians, consumption practices and the "torn self". Consumption, Markets & Culture 11, no. 2: 73-91.

Jamal, A. and M. Chapman. 2000. Acculturation and inter-ethnic consumer perceptions: Can you feel what we feel? Journal of Marketing Management 16: 365-91.

Jun, S., J.W. Gentry, A.D. Ball and G. Gonzales-Molina. 1994. Hispanic acculturation processes: Evidence against assimilation. Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research 1: 80-6.

Kates, S.M. 2004. The dynamics of brand legitimacy: An interpretive study in the gay men's community. Journal of Consumer Research 31, no. 2: 455-65.

Leong, C.-H. 2008. A multilevel research framework for the analyses of attitudes toward immigrants. International Journal of Intercultural Relations 32: 115–29.

Lindridge, A.M., M.K. Hogg and M. Shah. 2004. Imagined multiple worlds: How south asian women in britain use family and friends to navigate the "Border crossings" Between household and societal contexts. Consumption, Markets & Culture 7, no. 3: 211-38.

Luedicke, M.K. and M. Giesler. 2009. Host culture responses to brand-related acculturation: Legitimation struggles between german and turkish bmw owners in germany. In *Advances in Consumer Research*, eds McGill, Al and Shavitt, S, 135-38. Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

Luedicke, M.K. and E. Pichler. 2010. On the limits of immigrants' market-mediated social mobility. Paper presentat at the European Advances in Consumer Research, in London, UK.

Luhmann, N. 1995. *Social systems Writing science.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Marsh, A. and M. Sahin-Dikmen. 2002. *Discrimination in europe (report b).* London: Policy Studies Institute.

McCracken, G. 1986. Culture and consumption: A theoretical account of the structure and movement of the cultural meaning of consumer goods. Journal of Consumer Research 13, no. 1: 71-84.

Mehta, R. and R.W. Belk. 1991. Artifacts, identity, and transition: Favorite possesssions of indians and indian immigrants to the united states. Journal of Consumer Research 17, no. 4: 398-414.

Muñiz, A.M.J. and T. O'Guinn. 2001. Brand community. Journal of Consumer Research 27, no. 4: 412-32.

Nagel, J. 1994. Constructing ethnicity: Creating and recreating ethnic identity and culture. Social Problems 41, no. 1: 152-76.

NCSL. 2008. NCSL's top 10 policy issue forecast: Heat is on state legislatures.

Nesdale, D. and A.S. Mak. 2000. Immigrant acculturation attitudes and host country identification. Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology 10: 483-95.

O'Guinn, T., W.-N. Lee and R.J. Faber. 1986. Acculturation: The impact of divergent paths on buyer behavior. Advances in Consumer Research 13: 579-83.

Oswald, L.R. 1999. Culture swapping: Consumption and the ethnogenesis of middle-class haitian immigrants. Journal of Consumer Research 25, no. 4: 303-18.

Özçaglar-Toulouse, N. and L.N. Peñaloza. 2010. Acculturating masculinity: Second generation turks becoming men. In *Association for Consumer Research Conference*, eds Dahl, Dw, Johar, Gv and Van Osselaer, Smj: Duluth, MN: Association for Consumer Research.

Parsons, T. and R.F. Bales. 1955. *Family socialization and interaction process*. Glencoe, Ill: Free Press.

Peñaloza, L. 1989. Immigrant consumer acculturation. In *Advances in Consumer Research*, ed. Srull, Tk, 110-18: Association for Consumer Research.

Peñaloza, L. 1994. Atravesando fronteras/border crossings: A critical ethnographic exploration of the consumer acculturation of mexican immigrants. Journal of Consumer Research 21, no. 1: 32-54.

Peñaloza, L. 1995. Immigrant consumers: Marketing and public policy consideration in the global economy. Journal of Public Policy & Marketing 14, no. 1: 83-94.

Peñaloza, L. and M.C. Gilly. 1999. Marketer acculturation: The changer and the changed. Journal of Marketing 63, no. 3: 84-104.

Reilly, M.D. and M. Wallendorf. 1984. A longitudinal-study of mexican-american assimilation. Advances in Consumer Research 11: 735-40.

Reilly, M.D. and M. Wallendorf. 1987. A comparison of group differences in food consumption using household refuse. Journal of Consumer Research 14, no. 2: 289-94.

Rudmin, F.W. 2003. Critical history of the acculturation psychology of assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization. Review of General Psychology 7, no. 1: 3-37.

Rudmin, F.W. 2007. Acculturation alchemy: How miscitations make biculturalism appear beneficial. Psykologisk Tidsskrift 2: 4-10.

Rudmin, F.W. 2009. Constructs, measurements and models of acculturation and acculturative stress. International Journal of Intercultural Relations 33, no. 2009: 106-23.

Ruggiero, K.M., D.M. Taylor and W.E. Lambert. 1996. A model of heritage culture maintenance: The role of discrimination. International Journal of Intercultural Relations 20, no. 1: 47-67.

Rytina, N. 2009. Estimates of the legal permanent resident population in 2008: Office of Immigration Statistics.

Saegert, J., R.J. Hoover and M.T. Hilger. 1985. Characteristics of mexican american consumers. Journal of Consumer Research 12, no. 1: 104-9.

Sandıkcı, Ö. and G. Ger. 2010. Veiling in style: How does a stigmatized practice become fashionable? Journal of Consumer Research in press.

Sartre, J.-P. 1969. *Being and nothingness*. Oxon: Routledge. (Orig. pub. 1943.)

Schouten, J.W. and J.H. McAlexander. 1995. Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers. Journal of Consumer Research 22, no. 1: 43-62.

Seelye, H.N. and M.B. Brewer. 1970. Ethnocentrism and acculturation of north americans in guatemala. Journal of Social Psychology 80, no. 147-55.

Simon, B. 2009. *Everything but the coffee: Learning about american from starbucks*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Simons, S.E. 1901. Social assimilation. American Journal of Sociolgy 6, no. 790-822.

Singh, S. and M.Y. Hu. 2001. Context-dependent ethnic identity and its impact on product evaluations: A case of the asian indian immigrants. In *Association for Consumer Research Conference*, eds Tidwell, Pm and Muller, T, 150-5: Provot, UT: Association for Consumer Research

Suchman, M.C. 1995. Managing legitimacy - strategic and institutional approaches. Academy of Management Review 20, no. 3: 571-610.

Tajfel, H. and J.C. Turner. 1986. The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In *Psychology of intergroup relations*, eds Worchel, S and Austin, Wg, 7-24. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Teske Jr., R.H.C. and B.H. Nelson. 1974. Acculturation and assimilation: A clarification. American Ethnologist 1, no. 2: 351-67.

Thompson, C.J. 2004. Marketplace mythology and discourses of power. Journal of Consumer Research 31, no. June: 162-80.

Thompson, C.J., A. Rindfleisch and Z. Arsel. 2006. Emotional branding and the strategic value of the doppelgänger brand image. Journal of Marketing 70, no. 1: 50-64.

Thompson, C.J. and S.K. Tambyah. 1999. Trying to be cosmopolitan. Journal of Consumer Research 26, no. December: 214-41.

Turner, J.C., R.J. Brown and H. Tajfel. 1979. Social-comparison and group interest in ingroup favoritism. European Journal of Social Psychology 9, no. 2: 187-204.

Üstüner, T. and D.B. Holt. 2007. Dominated consumer acculturation: The social construction of poor migrant women's consumer identity projects in a turkish squatter. Journal of Consumer Research 34, no. 1: 41-55.

Üstüner, T. and D.B. Holt. 2010. Toward a theory of status consumption in less industrialized countries. Journal of Consumer Research 37, no. 1.

Veblen, T. 1927 [1899]. *The theory of the leisure class an economic study of institutions*. New ed. New York: Vanguard Press.

Wallendorf, M. and M.D. Reilly. 1983a. Distinguishing culture of origin from culture of residence. Advances in Consumer Research 10: 699-701.

Wallendorf, M. and M.D. Reilly. 1983b. Ethnic migration, assimilation, and consumption. Journal of Consumer Research 10, no. 3: 292-302.

Wamwara-Mbugua, L.W., T.B. Cornwell and G. Boller. 2008. Triple acculturation: The role of african americans in the consumer acculturation of kenyan immigrants. Journal of Business Research 61, no. 2008: 83-90.

Ward, C. and A.-M. Masgoret. 2006. An integrative model of attitudes towards immigrants. International Journal of Intercultural Relations 30, no. 2006: 671-82.

Zaltman, G. 2000. Consumer researchers: Take a hike! Journal of Consumer Research 26, no. March: 423-8.