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The Consuming City: Economic Stratification and the Glasgow Effect

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The development of consumer culture in Glasgow, Scotland has been a central strategy in response to the identity crisis caused by de-industrialisation. We consider whether regeneration strategies that centre on consumption are effective or whether they are they counter-productive and instead harming the social assets of citizens.

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A Play for Power: Exploring the Ways Consumption Marks Social Stratifications

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Paper #1: Effects of Geographic and Religious Stratification and Modernity in the Arab Gulf

Russell Belk, York University, Canada

Rana Sobh, Qatar University, Qatar

Paper #2: Viewing the Creation and Reproduction of Racial Stratification through Consumption: Life Histories of the Black Middle-Class in America

David Crockett, University of South Carolina, USA

Paper #3: Controlling Consumption: The Illusiveness and Pervasiveness of Gender Norms in the Ugandan Marketplace

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Paper #4: The Consuming City: Economic and Health Stratification and the Glasgow Effect

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SESSION OVERVIEW

This special session examines how power shapes consumption and limits policies or economic actions that attempt to bring about societal change through challenging social hierarchies. We bring together four papers that consider different types of stratification: geographical, religious, racial, generational, gender, and class. We demonstrate how consumption norms and practices that reinforce the stratifications are perpetuated or contested in the marketplace. We start by considering the different ways power dynamics and stratifications intersect and are experienced in the marketplace and build toward recognizing how these dynamics shape and influence the implementation of policies. Each of these presentations use different methods, and thus extend our awareness of tools researchers can use to study normative and socio-economic forces.

Russell Belk and Rana Sobh open the session with vignettes that reflect the intersectionality of geographical, religious, generational and gender stratifications occurring in the prosperous Islamic countries of Qatar and United Arab Emirates. Through cases that emerged in their three years of fieldwork, these scholars examine how consumers navigate the traditional structures and stratifications when Western popular culture starts to influence traditional family life.

David Crockett investigates the racial stratification of America through an historical analysis of postwar black middle-class consumers. He discusses the historical transitions from legislated racial segregation to stratifications maintained through structural and symbolic systems. Using life histories of black middle-class families, he documents how race and class stratifications are maintained through myths about consumption while their reproduction is being contested by generational differences.

Laurel Steinfield and Linda Scott explore the gender stratifications perpetuated by consumption practices in rural and urban Uganda. Policy and legislative protocols are encouraging women to become more educated and employed in the private and public sectors, yet the effectiveness of these changes is hampered by gender biases that affect the consumption of women. Using projective techniques and armed with a shopping bag of goods, Steinfield and Scott conduct interviews that unearth the normative prejudices and

pejorative labels that limit the consumption choices that can be made by women and observe the flow of these ideologies to urban areas.

Kathy Hamilton and Katherine Trebeck close with a presentation that demonstrates how economic stratifications are intensified by regeneration strategies. They call into question policies that attempt to spur economic investments and a culture of consumption, noting how too much emphasis on the marketplace can lead to an increase in poverty, inequality and health problems. Presenting the work they have done on the “Glasgow effect”, they remind us that the consumer marketplace is only one of many places in which the effects of stratifications are felt and experienced.

Our session asks how social stratifications are institutionalized and contested through the marketplace, but also reflects on the reasons why such stratifications should matter to policy-makers and should be accommodated in planning and interventions. It explores the tension that exists in market-based solutions to societal change, asking: in what instances does the marketplace perpetuate vulnerabilities and when does it enable empowerment and societal transitions? This session should be of interest to researchers interested in social stratifications, power, religion, race, gender, class, emerging economies and transformative consumer research.

Effects of Geographic and Religious Stratification and Modernity in the Arab Gulf

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Stratification in Qatar and UAE occurs both within these nations and between these nations as well as between the countries of origin of its non-citizen residents who make up 80 to 85 percent of local populations. Religion, location, citizenship, age, income, ethnicity, country of origin, and gender all play a role in the status of those living in these Arab Gulf countries. These stratifications are embedded within one another and in order to appreciate their impact on consumption, it is necessary to consider their intersections. Illustrations of the importance of local intersectionalities include contrasts such as the following:

1. A male Hindu guest worker from Kerala working in UAE for two years versus the same man when he returns to India.
2. A female Muslim Qatari married to a Bedu Qatari man (a Bedouin Arab of Qatari tribal origin) versus another Muslim Qatari woman married to an Ajam Qatari man whose heritage is Iranian and who may speak Farsi rather than Arabic.
3. A 45-year-old Qatari Muslim woman versus her 20-year-old daughter in university.
4. An expatriate Christian British businessman living in UAE versus an expatriate Muslim Indonesian cleaning woman for an Emirati family.
5. A 20-year-old Sri Lankan Muslim non-citizen born and raised in UAE versus his Emirati university friends.

These illustrations, based on a three-year ethnography, demonstrate how the recent petro-wealth and Western popular culture has affected social status and consumption patterns.

In the first case the guest worker in the UAE lives in a “labor camp” in Dubai and is bused daily between the camp and a high rise construction site. He has one day off a week and his employer holds his passport and sponsors his visa. He is near the bottom of the social hierarchy in UAE. He repatriates his money to his family

in Kerala where he will build a house and become a nouveau riche “king” when he returns home.

In the second case the woman married to the Bedu man has higher social status than the one married to the Ajam man, even though they are both citizens of Qatar and thereby entitled to benefits such as higher salaries, free education, water, and electricity, low cost housing loans, and free land for building a house. There is a further status hierarchy depending on the prominence of the Bedu couple’s clan. Although there are virtually no poor Qataris (or Emiratis), clan and heritage are stratification variables within these societies, with Abd Muslims who originate from North Africa being lower status than either Bedu or Ajam.

In the third case the mother and daughter occupy the same social status (unless the woman gained citizenship by marrying a Qatari man, in which case her daughter would not be a citizen). But the influence of modernity is likely to be strikingly different between the two. Both are likely to wear the traditional black abaya (gown) and shayla (head covering), but the daughter’s is more form-fitting, covers Western designer clothes including tight fitting jeans, red high heels, and accessories from Gucci, Prada, and Louis Vuitton, and is left partly unbuttoned with her hair peeking out from her shayla, also revealing her heavy makeup. Her abaya may be covered in Swarovski jewels and may even have a rock star insignia on the back. It costs hundreds or thousands of dollars and may be out of fashion in two months.

The fourth case involves a relatively wealthy businessman who lives in a high rise apartment and enjoys a high salary, but not enough to keep up with Emirates who have one of the highest per capita incomes in the world (along with Qataris). Unlike the businessman who lives far from the palatial homes of local Emirates, the cleaning woman lives with an Emirati family in a separate quarters. Like the guest workers she repatriates most of her money to her home country. She learns some Arabic and may be able to make the Hajj to Mecca.

Like the Brit, the Sri Lankan man may have a wealthy family, but they enjoy none of the privileges of citizenship and he can never become a citizen, even if he were to get permission to marry an Emirati woman. Since citizens have 20 percent of the jobs set aside for them and earn considerably higher salaries than non-citizens doing the same job in the same establishment, he is at a considerable economic disadvantage.

We draw on our ethnographic data to demonstrate the inadequacy of singular analyses of location, nationality, citizenship, age, gender, ethnicity, education, income, or religion alone in order to understand the status hierarchies of the Gulf States. Rather the structural inequalities that begin with religion and location, are entangled with the intersectionality of other characteristics that must be considered jointly in order to understand the role of consumption in the daily lives and statuses of those living in these newly rich nations.

Viewing the Creation and Reproduction of Racial Stratification through Consumption: Life Histories of the Black Middle-Class in America

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This research documents the racial stratification that occurs in the marketplace of America as consumer culture attains dominance in the mid-twentieth century. The history of consumer culture in the West can best be characterized as a social formation that shifts commodity consumption from a peripheral activity in social life to the quintessential activity of social life. The insights generated herein

are intended to highlight the critical role played by consumption practices, and consumer culture more broadly, in the creation and maintenance of the Black middle-class.

Any broad-reaching investigation of black middle class family life must place consumption practices and consumer culture at its center. Unfortunately, such a perspective has been either largely absent or marginalized in scholarship found in the humanities as well as the social sciences. Traditionally, scholars in the US study Black life largely by looking at labor and income inequality in isolation or in tandem with critical social institutions like family, school, and church. This traditional approach is very limiting insofar as it ignores or marginalizes consumption’s centrality to identity formation as well as its role in the reproduction of culture. Fortunately, contemporary scholarship has begun to include consumption as part of the analysis of the black experience. Unfortunately, consumption still lurks at the margins.

This research addresses this imbalance by moving consumption to the center of the analysis of the Black middle-class experience. It views the construction of personal and social identity in the Black middle-class as well as upward and downward social mobility through the lens of consumption. It forms part of a larger project that studies consumption at the intersection of race-, class-, and gender stratification under historical conditions specific to late capitalism.

The Black middle-class (typically inclusive of African, Afro-Caribbean, and other immigrants designated as “black” in the U.S.) emerges in recognizable form at roughly the same historical moment that a culture of mass consumption emerges to supplement and then replace a culture of mass production at the very center of U.S. social life. Although the emergence of a black middle class began in the Reconstruction period immediately following the U.S. Civil War (DuBois 1935), the focus of this study is on the post-World War II black middle class, which is qualitative different from its pre-war counterpart (Patillo-McCoy 1999). The post-war black middle class emerges in a consumer culture that is simultaneously a “democracy of goods” yet rife with racial stratification: African Americans are initially the object of legalized racial stratification in markets and the state (Drake and Cayton 1962). Following the collapse of the Jim Crow regime in the U.S., access to markets (and certainly to the cultural capital thought to flow from full participation in them) is at times attenuated even for high income African Americans. Structural features (e.g., high levels of residential segregation) and symbolic representation (e.g., widely-held stigmatization) continue to stratify the market. At the same time consumption serves as a primary means by which the black middle class distinguishes itself from the black working class and poor (Patillo-McCoy 1999). But, even more disconcerting for what Lacy (2007) describes as the “elite” black middle class, in an intergenerational boundary: evident feelings of alienation separate black middle class informants from their children. This interconnection and interplay between consumer culture and black middle class status comes to the fore through the life histories interviews of these informants. Using boundary theory, I show how their histories demonstrate two broad categories of consumption-focused strategies for configuring ethno-racial identity.

In the first category, actors seek to change boundary topography. That is, they try to expand boundaries to incorporate out-group members into an identity group, or, they contract boundaries to expel in-group members. These strategies are on the whole unavailable to Blacks in the US. Thus, I focus on the second category, where actors seek to change their affiliation with particular boundary-created identity groups or alter a boundary’s meaning. Following Wimmer (2008), I show how informants implement consumption-focused strategies (inverting the racial hierarchy, equalization, boundary-

crossing and collective repositioning) to attenuate the impact of stratification with varying degrees of success. Part of this success is determined by the destruction of myths by generational changes; that is, I find that racial stratification in the marketplace is maintained through myths yet these myths, and thus the stratification, lose meaning and power over consumption as they become challenged by generational divergences.

Controlling Consumption: The Illusiveness and Pervasiveness of Gender Stratifications in the Ugandan Marketplace

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In Uganda, as women become more educated and employed, and as laws are enacted to protect their rights, male economic power might be expected to erode. Ideologies, however, continue to uphold the gender hierarchies in this traditional patriarchal society. In rural communities, where traditional tribal laws are still practiced, women continue to be treated like property, traded for a bride-price as soon as they can bear children, or, if a widow, being inherited by her husband's family and forced to marry his male relative should she have no male children to provide for her. Women continue to submit to these laws for fear that they will be outcasts of society. The local model of domestic virtue continues to restrict a woman's role in the economy even in urban areas (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh (2006).

Our research investigated the way such gender restrictions are perpetuated through family consumption decisions. We frame our analysis using two of Lukes (2005) faces of power: decisions and preferences. In rural Uganda, a woman is limited in her ability to keep her own money or to get to the shops to buy needed goods. If she works with her husband, the money goes directly to him. Any money she earns through selling small amounts of produce can easily be taken by her husband who, culturally, is allowed to beat her. She becomes trapped at home, burdened with the responsibility of childcare, kept from travelling the miles between her homestead and the trading center by cultural beliefs that make female mobility on a motorcycle immoral. Although norms are less openly restrictive in urban areas, the other face of power – power over preferences – does exist in judgments of appropriate versus inappropriate consumption, with pejorative terms applied to women who challenge gender norms for consumption.

It is infamously difficult for respondents to articulate these kinds of gender issues. To study the influences of power over preferences, therefore, we devised techniques that could be used in spite of language differences and low literacy rates. For instance, we researched typical purchasing habits in remote areas in order to create a typical "shopping bag" of groceries and augmented that set of goods with objects said to have strongly gendered identities in local habits. The final "bag" held a broad array of items, including common foods and everyday "necessities," as well as gender specific items for both females and males (e.g., hair extensions versus alcohol and phone time). We took the actual collection of objects into remote areas and asked participants to group the goods into piles of items (1) for which they pay and for which their spouse pays, (2) that the household often buys or never buys, and (3) items that men/women think are necessary versus unnecessary. The results made visible the social norms that elevate the consumption habits of men and place limits on the consumption of women. The items men denoted as necessary but said their wives would see as unnecessary (batteries, airtime, and alcohol) nevertheless were frequently purchased staples of the household; in contrast, goods women thought were necessities

(sanitary pads, hair extensions, and skin-whitening lotion), but were not thought important by men, were rarely, if ever, bought.

Men were expected to be the main providers for the house, but once they have fulfilled a basic commitment they were allowed to spend their money as they wished – with no social stigma even for flashy purchases or frequent drinking. Women, on the other hand, were not only to grow the food and provide for the other needs of the family (clothes, education, etc), but were always expected to put their family needs before their own. They will buy their daughters sanitary pads, but will not buy sanitary pads for themselves. There is a strong moral suasion held over women to put their families first and to not buy things for themselves, which does not exist to the same level for men.

We used a projective technique based on Haire's (1950) coffee study to elicit judgments of consumption. We grouped together four goods: sanitary pads, hair extensions, lipstick, and skin-whitening cream, and asked respondents to describe a woman who purchases these items for herself, on a regular basis. In rural Uganda, this woman was often labeled as a "malaya" – a prostitute. To indulge in "inappropriate" consumption habits earns a woman a much stronger social stigma than a man. These moral restrictions protect a man's money, and thus his freedom to consume, on two accounts: they ensure that a woman will restrict her personal consumption and use her own money, instead of her husband's money, towards family expenses (thus allowing him more disposable income for his personal consumption) and they prevent her from asking her husband for money for personal items for fear that she will be suspected of prostitution. Even among university students in urban Uganda, a woman who buys self-indulgences on a regular basis was assumed to be engaging in exchange sex. Thus, the myth of the "malaya" transfers from rural to urban settings, applied specifically to women who challenge the social norm of limiting their personal consumption. However, the gender norms that limit economic opportunities, thus causing women to be dependent on men as providers of goods and potentially driving them to engage in prostitution, are seldom recognized.

We see further through this study how gender stratifications in consumption limit the effectiveness of policies and legislation. Our research in rural Uganda, which forms part of a bigger study on girl's education and sanitary pads, demonstrates how gender biases in household decisions can place limits on a girl's ability to continue in school, despite government and civil society programs designed to further female education. For instance, families consistently place a man's social drinking needs ahead of his daughter's need for sanitary pads, thus limiting the girl's ability to stay in school. In turn, the next generation of women fails to escape the ideologically-imposed restriction on her economic autonomy, is traded in marriage, and the whole cycle begins again.

The Consuming City: Economic Stratification and the Glasgow Effect

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This presentation will focus on the city of Glasgow (located within the central belt of Scotland) and explore the way its economic development is influenced by ideological, socio-cultural and historical forces. Images, discourse and media representations associated with Glasgow offer opposing views regarding the success, prosperity and identity of the city. On the one hand, Glasgow is proclaimed to be a city of retail and following London is the UK's second largest shopping destination. On the other hand, Glasgow has high levels of deprivation. With this in mind, we will consider the

following research questions: Is the focus on consumption making the citizens of Glasgow vulnerable? Are regeneration strategies that centre on consumption effective both for economic development and individual consumers? Or are they counter-productive and instead harming the social assets of citizens already vulnerable due to decades of deindustrialisation?

The development of consumer culture in Glasgow has been a central strategy in response to the identity crisis caused by de-industrialisation and the decline of traditional employment opportunities, particularly that offered by the ship-building industry. Similar to Miles (2010), the consuming city has become central to urban life to the extent that policy-makers and urban planners focus on consumption at the expense of anything else. Since the early 1980s, place marketing campaigns have drawn on sophisticated lifestyle concepts to position Glasgow as a high class destination. One of the most prominent, the 'Glasgow: Scotland with Style' marketing slogan was launched in 2005 in an effort to enhance the city's reputation, increase visitor numbers and increase the economic value of tourism. Proclaimed as the 'Style Mile,' Glasgow's city centre is presented as a destination filled with what Ritzer (2010, p.7) would term 'cathedrals of consumption:'

"Everyone knows that Glaswegians live, breathe, eat and sleep style. Little wonder that, in the very heart of the marvellous city they call home, one square mile houses the most extraordinary concentration of inspirational shopping, atmospheric cafés, fine restaurants, and decadent late night haunts." (<http://www.glasgowstylemile.com/>)

The assumption is decades of regeneration policies that focus on physical improvements and the construction of luxury shops will address growing inequalities through increased employment opportunities and other benefits created by economic growth. Some point towards Glasgow being awarded European City of Culture in 1990 and the hosting of the Commonwealth Games in 2014 as evidence of success. However, poverty persists and inequalities have widened. Recent statistics indicated that the percentage of Scots living in relative poverty is 17 per cent, while income inequality has increased since 2004/5 (Scottish Government, 2011). In Glasgow, there are particular concerns related to poor health and high mortality rates. Walsh et al. (2010) undertook a detailed comparison of Glasgow and two other UK cities (Liverpool and Manchester) which have almost identical levels of deprivation and have similar experiences of deindustrialisation. Findings highlighted that Glasgow suffers from excess mortality beyond that attributable to the city's high levels of socio-economic deprivation, a phenomenon known as the "Glasgow Effect."

In this presentation we draw on data from Oxfam's Humankind Index for Scotland which was built following consultation with Scottish people about what aspects of life make a real difference to the prosperity, resilience and sustainability of their households and communities. Particular effort was made to ensure that the consultation was inclusive, especially with regard to seldom heard groups and data collection included focus groups, community workshops, street stalls and an online survey. The results are a set of weighted priorities that describe what Scottish people identify as important to living well in their communities. Findings point to health, security, time with friends and family, access to green spaces and satisfaction in work as priorities. Such priorities are dramatically different from how Glasgow has been marketed – competitive, stylish, imaged-focused. They are also unlikely to be outcomes

flowing from the current mode of economic development being pursued in the city.

Although we focus on Glasgow, the trend towards more entrepreneurial governance means that increasingly cities across the world are being marketed as shopping destinations (Kavaratzis, 2004). The danger with such an approach is that the city becomes 'less a place for and of the people and more a unit for the efficient maximisation of consumption' (Miles, 2010, p2). We demonstrate that beneath idealised marketing images, this approach to regeneration is not conducive to the reduction of poverty and inequality. This has important implications for both city planners and city marketers as a more multidimensional focus on the planning and branding of cities would provide a better fit with the priorities of citizens and also ensure greater sustainability. By considering goals beyond economic growth and elevating policies which contribute to better distribution of that growth and growth of what matters to communities in the first place, policy makers would be in a better position to really make a difference to local residents.

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