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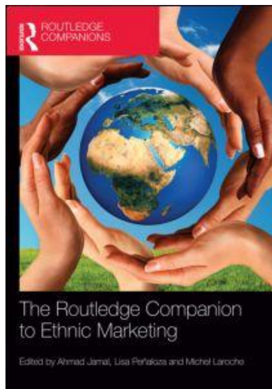

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Wanting things and needing affiliation

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10

Wanting things and needing affiliation

Ethnic consumers and materialism

Mark Cleveland

Introduction

He who dies with the most toys wins.

–Popular American bumper sticker

Ethnicity and culture affect perceptions and priorities, and consequently, consumers' attitudes and behaviours. Cultural theorists envisage consumption as 'an inherently communicative act, a form of symbolic behaviour that creates and expresses meaning' (Wilk 1998, p. 320). Consumer goods are needed for 'making visible and stable the categories of culture' (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, p. 59). Measured against purely ideological or behavioural aspects, tangible cultural features disseminate far more readily to other cultures. Consumption-related values are pertinent for understanding the formation and expression of ethnic identities. Globalization, particularly the internationalization of markets and media, potentially heralds the loosening of cultural bonds. A contrarian perspective maintains that present circumstances not only motivate, but facilitate, the preservation of cultural differences. Whichever holds true, the ways consumers identify themselves is clearly an important managerial issue (Bouchet 1995).

Corporations are intensifying their efforts to develop and extend international brands. Advertisers employ numerous themes connected with materialism: achievement and success, abundance and wealth, gratification and happiness, glamour and exclusivity; which operate to reinforce status, social class and the desirability of upward social mobility. Researchers have long noted the association between brands and social status. In emerging economies, possessing Western brands often enhances the owner's social standing and can buttress their self-perceptions of sophistication and cosmopolitanism (Ger and Belk 1996a; Ger and Belk 1996b; Wong and Ahuvia 1998). The enormous potential afforded by economic prosperity in the developing world (and among ethnic minorities within developed nations) drives promotional efforts targeting consumers living in these countries. Rising discretionary income and the pervasiveness of media promoting hedonism and status ostensibly motivate people to seek recognition by conspicuously displaying consumption symbols (Dubois and Duquesne 1993; Sharma 2011). A visit to Nanjing Road (Shanghai), Causeway Bay (Hong Kong), the Ginza (Tokyo), the Dubai Mall (the world's largest) or for that matter, l'avenue des Champs-Élyssés (Paris, where the upscale shops of Cartier, etc. are thronged with East-Asian and Middle-Eastern shoppers) will persuade any sceptic that

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materialistic passion has been enthusiastically embraced by collectivist peoples. Indeed, *BCG* predicts that China will soon become the world's largest luxury market, overtaking the United States.[1] Following decades of material deprivation under Maoism, the Chinese 'are now hungry for material possessions, making up for lost time' (Yang and Stening 2011, p. 449).

The uncertainties that accompany rapid social change encourage materialism (Ger and Belk 1996b; Cleveland and Chang 2009). Hirschman (1992) opined that materialistic tendencies (e.g., conspicuous or compulsive consumption) represent attempts to restore a sense of self-concept when undergoing major life transitions or during moments of personal crisis. Belk *et al.* (2003) wrote that '[s]ocial control of consumer desire, either in the form of external control or self-control, is thought to decline in a consumer society . . . [this] desire is no longer a sin or vice but an attractive and sought after state of being' (p. 331). The *Cultural imperialism hypothesis* (Tomlinson 1991) – also denoted as *Coca-Colanization* (Hannerz 1992) and *McWorld* (Barber 1996) – evokes an assimilationist standpoint, assuming that because individuals are easily indoctrinated by the seductive powers of marketing, the natural desire of humans to seek material enrichment coupled with the global penetration of Western media or styled on Western ideals propels consumers to emulate the materialistic lifestyle of their counterparts living in Western nations. An opposing argument claims that some individuals recoil from globalization, retreating to their established values and ways of life, partly through fear of inundation by a homogenizing culture of consumption. Other consumer trajectories have been proposed, ensuing from the permutation of indigenous values with global cultural forces. With the globalization of markets and the multiculturalism of societies, international and domestic marketing managers are challenged to detect consumer segments with similar dispositions, preferences and behavioural responses; and to incorporate this understanding when constructing marketing strategies.

It is curious, against this background, that quantitative research examining ethnicity and materialism is meager, and cross-cultural studies are rarer still (Douglas and Craig 2010; Sharma 2011; Cleveland *et al.* 2009a; Shrum *et al.* 2012). The limited findings are confounded by different conceptualizations of materialism. Most literature positions materialism as an individual-level construct, although it is arguably as much the product of social forces. It is certainly true that 'important possessions reflect personal values and the inner self', yet these private meanings 'are shaped by and reflect one's culture' (Watson *et al.* 2002, p. 925). Embodying socio-cultural symbols, products and brands signal identity as well as indicating cultural complexity and change, particularly for consumers buffeted by several cultural spheres. The homogenous communities and ethnic identities of earlier ages are giving way to pluralistic societies and, for some individuals, polysemous identities. Consumers may oscillate between these identities, be they local, ethnic, religious or transnational. At other times, these entwined identities are inseparable; converging or conflicting depending on the context. Collectively, these issues inhibit generalizing materialism theories to international and intranational contexts.

Is the nature of materialism uniform across ethnic groups? How do materialistic tendencies amend over consumer lifecycle stages and changes in economic and social circumstances; how consistent are these patterns across ethnic conditions? Does globalization inexorably disseminate materialistic values? Are some ethnic traditions revitalizing in the face of globalization and if so, which ones and under which consumption contexts? Is there evidence that insular consumers have immunity to materialistic passion? How does ethnic affiliation and acculturation combine to advance materialism and could these relationships vary across cultures and situations? This chapter conceives materialism as an individual-level disposition that is regulated by the cultural values and behavioural norms operational in a particular social situation. Figure 10.1 summarizes the concepts considered. Reviewing the literatures on materialism, ethnicity and culture change, the focus is on elucidating the multifarious interrelationships of these constructs. I clarify how materialism is

a product of enculturation and culture change. I explain how materialism differentially manifests at the intersection of social norms and the consumption situation, and offer reasons why these vary across ethnic groups. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the challenges facing cross-cultural inquiries on materialism, the implications for marketers and topics requiring research.

Materialism

The philosopher Sartre (1943) conjectured that the entire corpus of human conduct is reducible into three interrelated cardinal categories: 'being', 'doing', and 'having'. The terms 'consumer' and 'consuming' have progressively become the foundation for describing the human experience (Firat 1995), and for better or for worse, a person's sense of self or identity is interlaced with their material possessions (Domzal and Kernan 1993). It is therefore not surprising that in the past four decades, hundreds of papers have been published on materialism (Yang and Stening 2011; Cleveland and Chang 2009). Belying this intense activity, very little work has examined the innateness of materialism. Researching twins, Giddens *et al.* (2009) found an independent relationship with genetics. They concluded that individual differences in materialism must therefore stem principally from environmental causes.

Whereas some researchers conceive materialism as a personality trait (e.g. Belk 1985) or representing an attitude constellation (e.g. Kilbourne *et al.* 2005), others envisage it as a personal

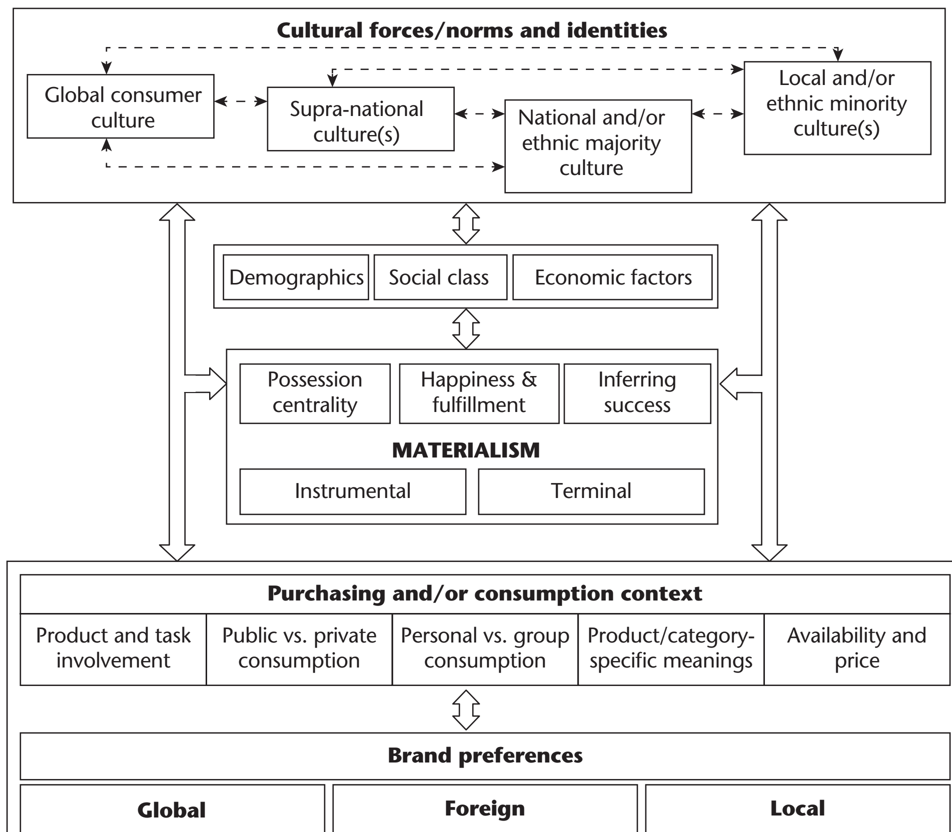

Figure 10.1 Ethnicity, acculturation and materialism framework

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value (e.g., Richins and Dawson 1992; Kasser 2002; Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002) or as a cultural characteristic (e.g. Inglehart 1990). Some envision materialism as relatively stable (Belk 1985), other authors contend that it is manifested situationally (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988; Hirschman 1992; Cleveland *et al.* 2009a). Uncertainty exists as to whether materialism is antecedent or consequent to consumption. Most papers depict materialism as ultimately negative for consumer well-being, yet a few persuasively claim that material pursuits potentially yield positive outcomes (Hudders and Pandelaere 2011; Karabati and Cemalcilar 2010; Richins and Rudmin 1994). The multiplicity of theories, conceptualizations and operationalizations (Shrum *et al.* 2012) has frustrated efforts to coherently link materialism to culture and ethnicity – concepts that themselves are fraught with ambiguity. The nature of materialism across cultures and how social forces affect materialism across ethnicities remains indefinite. Social groups may readily embrace or resist the consumption-based orientation characterizing Global Consumer Culture (GCC). The same consumer may be variably prone to materialistic tendencies, as per the social setting enveloping the consumption situation.

Materialism is 'the importance ascribed to the ownership and acquisition of material goods in achieving major life goals or desired states' (Richins 2004, p. 210). The most widely adopted characterizations are those advanced by Belk (1985), Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) and Richins and Dawson (1992). Belk (1985) conceives materialism as a personality trait, consisting of three facets. *Possessiveness* refers to the 'inclination and tendency to retain control or ownership of one's possessions' (Ger and Belk 1990, p. 186). The other two dimensions entail negative connotations towards others. Whereas *envy* embodies the 'displeasure and ill will at the superiority of [another person] in happiness, success, reputation or the possession of anything desirable', *non-generosity* represents 'an unwillingness to give possessions to or share possessions with others' (p. 186). Envy is distinguishable from jealousy as the former relates to others' possessions (wanting something of another) and the latter, on personal possessions (not wanting to share your own possessions; Belk 1985).

From a motivational perspective, Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981) distinguish instrumental and terminal materialism. The latter describes consumption as an end, and stereotypically reflects how materialism negatively associates with consumer well-being. Achieving happiness through possessions is unattainable because this form of materialism is habit-forming and thus insatiable. Whereas a moderate level of envy is potentially beneficial for motivational purposes, at the extreme envy is a destructive trait, connected to several psychological disorders and anti-social behaviours (Burroughs amd Rindfleisch 2002). Non-generosity has also been empirically associated with unhappiness (Belk 1984). *Terminal materialism* intimates valuing stuff more than people (Ger and Belk 1996b), and for some, possessions substitute for deficient interpersonal relations (Rindfleisch *et al.* 1997). Achievement that is principally socially oriented implies that the pursuit of material goods stems from a deep-seated motivation to fulfill the expectations of relevant others, e.g., family (Markus and Kitayama 1991). *Instrumental materialism* is thus more a consequence of socialization relative to terminal materialism, which is perhaps primarily idiosyncratic. With instrumental materialism, objects are valued because they operate to achieve other objectives: a gift serves to strengthen a relationship; a creative or sacred object provides an aesthetic experience or enables fulfilment of a cultural ritual, and so forth (Zinkhan 1994). In this way, materialism needn't negatively impact subjective well-being. It is interesting to note that the opposite state of materialism – *asceticism* – has also been linked to mental disorders and maladaptive behaviours, which might ensue from self-denial of materialistic satisfaction (Belk 1985).

While some researchers cling to the trait perspective, the majority depict materialism as a value (Yang and Stening 2011). As defined by Rokeach (1973), values are 'enduring beliefs

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that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence' (p. 5). Value systems exist at the psychological and sociological levels (Schwartz 1999). Values underpin a large part of human cognition. Values are less circumstantial than attitudes, transcending particular objects. Like most values and norms, materialistic values are believed to be instilled in children by parents and other socialization agents, for example, in terms of giving/receiving gifts for birthdays and cultural occasions, as well as rewarding/withholding material items (e.g. toys) as a response to (or to encourage) appropriate conduct and to punish (discourage) inappropriate behaviours (Belk 1985). Consistent with the socialization argument, Rindfleisch *et al.* (1997) linked materialism in young adults to their experiences growing up under various forms of family structure. Richins and Dawson (1992) conceptualize materialism as an enduring personal value, inculcated by various socialization agents. Analogous to Belk's (1985) tripartite conceptualization, this value spans three domains: (1) the centrality of possessions in a person's life, (2) the belief that acquiring possessions yields happiness and fulfillment and (3) the use of belongings to infer the success of oneself and others.

Long ago, Veblen (1899) and Weber (1904–05[1947]) reasoned that *conspicuous consumption* (and its doppelganger, conspicuous waste)[2] was a tactic employed by individuals as a way to signal their identity and place within the social network. Baudrillard (1968) was among the first to explicitly expound the social meanings within consumer objects. These items are used by materialists to communicate information about themselves to other people, e.g., for signaling social status, adherence to group norms and indicating identity (Hudders and Pandelaere 2011). According to the *theory of planned behavior* (Ajzen 1985) the fulfillment of any behaviour is determined by behavioural intention and perceived behavioural control. The former stems from attitudes, subjective norms and the motivation to comply with these norms; whereas the latter concerns perceptions of ability to behave in a certain way (i.e. volition). Individual consumption behaviours, therefore, are shaped by and exert influence upon, the opinions and consumption activities of other members in the social network. Despite this reality, 'consumption's role in larger collectives, such as social networks and communities that operate within and across identity categories, is comparatively under-researched' (Crockett *et al.* 2011, p. 47).

Shrum *et al.* (2012) recently advocated a functional perspective on materialism, which they defined as 'the extent to which individuals attempt to engage in the construction and maintenance of the self through the acquisition and use of products, services, experiences, or relationships that are perceived to provide desirable symbolic value' (p. 2). They identified six motives that can be satisfied by material means: self-esteem, efficacy, meaning, continuity, distinctiveness and belonging. The latter three strongly connect with social membership. *Continuity* refers to identity-maintenance efforts over time and situations (e.g. purchasing 'home-country' products, keeping objects as nostalgic markers). *Distinctiveness* entails consumption rituals that signal differentiation; e.g. when immigrants wear traditional apparel. *Belonging* is motivated by the need for affiliation and acceptance, and for immigrants this could also enact towards the mainstream society (e.g. embracing a local sports team). All three represent 'identity construction motives fulfilled through *other signaling*' (Shrum *et al.* 2012, p. 4), for social comparison purposes or to obtain social approval.

Consumption embodies symbolism, revealing the formation or conservation of selfhood and affiliation, as well as denoting social and occupational status. Several authors have hinted that materialism is aggravated by worries of social condemnation and negative evaluations by others (Karabati and Cemalcilar 2010; He *et al.* 2012). Social behaviours are principally determined by norms guiding appropriate conduct (including the consequences of performing or not conforming) in a given situation (Triandis 1994).

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Culture and ethnic identity

Attitudes, values and behaviours are a coproduction of idiosyncratic ingredients (personality traits, experiences) and shared cultural factors (Schwartz 1999). Since culture is so 'entwined with all facets of human existence . . . it is often difficult to determine how and in what ways its impact is manifested' (Craig and Douglas 2006, p. 322). Culture is antecedent to human thought and behaviour (Berry 1997; Triandis 1994). Due to its inherent complexity and intangibility, culture cannot be measured *per se*; one can only measure proxy signifiers. These typically consist of the degree to which value and belief systems and associated behavioural trappings are maintained, promoted and move across social boundaries.

Identity 'is the idea one has about oneself, one's characteristic properties, one's own body, and the values one considers to be important' (de Mooij 2004, p. 109). Ethnic and other forms of social identity incorporate culture into a person's self-concept, fundamentally permeating the feelings and actions of cultural members (Markus and Kitayama 1991). The inculcation of Ethnic Identity (EID) occurs throughout childhood, rooted in the contrasts children make between their own group and other groups, and reinforced by the socializing efforts of parents to infuse in their child a feeling of group membership (Rosenthal and Cichello 1986). This belongingness is indispensable to the development of the child's self-definition, which in turn eases the acquisition of cultural values and behaviours. With changes in social expectations, physical development and effects on self-esteem, identity assumes greater significance during adolescence (Erikson 1959). Studying EID requires examining how group members themselves understand and interpret their own ethnicity (Phinney 1990). EID must therefore be conceptualized as a psychological variable consisting of individuals' perceptions of social belongingness, as opposed to an objective descriptor of precise meaning, e.g., race, nationality, religious or language group (Venkatesh 1995). Eriksen (1993) reasons that ethnicity is a relational construct, best examined from the standpoint of group formation, maintenance and interaction with other groups. Consequently, members' sense of self-identification is 'mediated by the perceptions of others' (Venkatesh 1995, p. 33). As per Oswald (1999, p. 312), 'language, customs, representations of the past, religious beliefs, a sense of common origin, rules of comportment, behaviours that contrast with those of outsiders – all symbolize boundaries of inclusion and exclusion between social groups, levels and modes of belonging, leadership modalities and social identity'.

Due to mixed ethnicities and exposure to external cultures individuals can identify with multiple groups, and variably acquire, adhere or reject few, some, or many aspects from each group (Phinney 1990). Over successive generations, central and invisible facets (i.e. values) tend to be preserved by immigrants and their progeny, with erosion more likely along peripheral and visible facets such as language and media usage (Rosenthal and Feldman 1992). Moreover, people can switch back and forth between loci of identity (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989; Askegaard *et al*. 2005). Role theory (Wilson and Bozinoff 1980) posits that individuals are composed of multiple selves (ideal vs. actual, independent vs. interdependent, etc.), and different roles activate various identities. Analogous to a play, the same person can act quite differently (following a particular script) and use different props and costumes (products), depending on the situational requirements. The more salient a given identity, the more the individual will partake in identity-related activities. The stronger the level of socio-cultural identification, the greater is the dedication to group values/norms and hence, the group's sway on the person's attitudes/behaviours (Phinney 1990; Jamal 2003). Frideres and Goldenberg (1982) observed that EID was most prominent during religious/secular holidays, when travelling and when spending time with family. According to Oswald (1999, p. 303), 'consumers routinely "culture swap" – they

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borrow or buy the cultural trappings of other groups . . . since goods take on different meanings as consumers move between one identity and another'. Here, EID is a voluntary choice; negating the customary belief that consumers are merely culture bearers by recognizing that they are also culture producers (Arnould and Thompson 2005).

Ethnic identity thus embodies a higher-order, subjective construct, reflecting the idea that a person's identity builds around numerous aspects, which are inadequately summarized by uni-dimensional, objective criteria. Focusing on the relationships to materialism, the ensuing paragraphs discuss key ethnicity aspects.

The notion that consumption is contingent on ethnicity and culture change is well established. Influencing perceptions, configuring priorities and translating consumer needs into wants, culture also reinforces behavioural expectations via social norms. Certain norms are formal and explicit (e.g., laws, club regulations); most are implicit and informal, with such knowledge (including possible rewards/sanctions for conformity/deviance) acquired gradually through group engagements. These norms affect behavioural intentions, ultimately shaping behaviour. Thus within a given context, whether materialism is perceived as a moral indiscretion by the relevant in-group combined with the individual's degree of adherence to group values/norms – including appropriateness of autonomous opinions – determines whether materialism will be enacted.

Social psychologists describe the need to belong as a deep-seated, pervasive human motivation and the foundation for comprehending interpersonal behaviour. Two requirements are implicated to satisfy this drive: '[f]irst, there is a need for frequent, affectively pleasant interactions with a few other people, and, second, these interactions must take place in the context of a temporally stable and enduring framework of affective concern for each other's welfare' (Baumeister and Leary 1995, p. 497). For immigrants and ethnic minorities, *social networks* are indispensable for ethnic maintenance/expression and for consumer acculturation (Peñaloza 1989; Peñaloza 1994). Ethnic associations, neighbourhoods and other networks established by minorities also enable members to live somewhat isolated from mainstream society. The importance of maintaining *interpersonal relationships* with in-group members may elevate materialism. Possessions 'are a convenient means of storing the memories and feelings that attach to our sense of past' (Belk 1988, p. 148). Nostalgia is connected to many consumption experiences (Holbrook 1993). Associated products, particularly when consumed with kin and kind, help the consumer relive cherished moments. Assimilating the symbolic meaning inherent to valued possessions, these objects form part of the extended self (Belk 1988), enhancing self-concept and constructing identity (Hudders and Pandelaere 2011).

It is not only the owner that defines materialistic goods, but also the owner's impression of how s/he thinks others will evaluate the goods. Researching advertising memory in social contexts, Puntoni and Tavassoli (2007) found that the presence of others activated impression management concerns. *Evaluation-apprehension theory* (Baumeister and Leary 1995) and *social capital theory* (Bourdieu 1984) imply that the perceptions of relevant others mediates individual materialism levels. Materialistic consumers 'are concerned about displaying their status and possessions in their relevant social groups' (Sharma 2011, p. 289). Command over economic resources supports and is reinforced by social capital. Immigrant and ethnic minority consumers might cultivate a *conspicuous consumption* lifestyle, to gauge and convey their own success (Cleveland and Chang 2009). Alternatively, an inconspicuous consumption strategy could emphasize adherence to cultural norms emphasizing austerity, or reduce the risk of being categorized into the wrong ethnic group (Shrum *et al.* 2012). In public, individuals generally abstain from expressing opinions or engaging in behaviours that could convey a negative impression or invite disapproval from others. Studies show that felt emotions (e.g., conceit, humiliation) are

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felt more acutely when in the presence of others (He *et al.* 2012). Lastly, from a *social exchange theory* perspective, the exchange of material goods might substitute for direct interactions with another/others, or an attempt to compensate for perceived inadequacies thereof (Wilk 1998; Rindfleisch *et al.* 1997).

Indispensable for communication, language comprises a channel for conveying the intangible components of culture – activities and histories, as well as their interpretations – across place and time (Craig and Douglas 2006). Individuals modify their verbal expressions to conform to social expectations and to coordinate in-group activities. This interactivity distinguishes from the passive, uni-directional flow characterizing most media (Cleveland *et al.* 2015). *Media consumption* is another prominent ethnicity dimension, particularly since it is somewhat volitional (Lee and Tse 1994). Satellite television and the internet enable individuals to select from a set of alternatives. Reference group exposure depends in part on media choices, which is both a cause and effect of the individual's worldview. Holt (1998) distinguishes the media habits of high and low *cultural capital* consumers. The former, with their cosmopolitan disposition, consume international media and gain exposure to foreign reference groups; enabling adoption of products/styles from elsewhere. This group sets or modifies the standards (the subjective, elaborated codes) dictating suitable patterns of consumption, including those regulating status and hedonic goods, which then trickle down to lower social strata. Low cultural-capital consumers tend to confine their media and reference groups to local or ethnic sources. Subsequently, the parochial group relies heavily on objective forms of meaning inherent to consumption (i.e. restricted codes). Thus, the dual role played by cultural capital, in terms of establishing and assigning significance to status goods, ensures that the objects and connotations employed as markers will normally vary across social classes and potentially, cultural groups.

Other ethnic aspects commonly invoked include *ethnic customs*, *aesthetics and rituals* (Phinney 1990). The multiplicity and variability of customs makes it impractical to postulate specific relationships; some activities may encourage materialistic tendencies, whereas others might inhibit the same. *Family structure* and adherence to traditional *gender roles* have both served as ethnicity indicators. These resemble several cultural values discussed later.

Most studies report negative links between materialism and happiness (Millar and Thomas 2009). The unquenchable nature of terminal materialism is clearly detrimental; however, a positive relationship could exist. Some motives driving instrumental materialism (economic security, affiliation, self-improvement, upward mobility, etc.) associate positively with social well-being (Karabati and Cemalcilar 2010; Richins and Rudmin 1994). The valence 'may depend on what other values one holds central, particularly if these other values are antithetical to a materialistic lifestyle' (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002, p. 349), for example, religious ideals.

The self-promotion, consumption-based orientation embodied by materialism is regarded as an aspect of economic affluence, secularism and Western post-industrial life (Ger and Belk 1990). Most religions are diametrically opposed to materialistic desires, and religious values hold more sway in traditional societies (Watson *et al.* 2002; Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). Nearly all consumers worldwide identify with a particular religious creed, yet few studies examine how religion guides consumer behaviour. World religions share an emphasis on subordinating personal objectives to focus on the betterment of others, and demoting the significance of material belongings in favour of embracing spiritual aspirations. Catholic teachings, for example, are irreconcilable with the self-centredness of materialism; a point repeatedly preached by Pope John Paul II (Tobacyk *et al.* 2011). Conversely, contemporary North American culture – preponderantly individualist and Christian – has been linked to the anthropocentric concept that humans possess dominion over the Earth, as stated in

the Bible (Genesis I). Most Americans affiliate with Protestantism, of which the tenets find some compatibility with materialism. As per the *Protestant work ethic* (Weber 1947), 'personal financial success is a divine blessing' (Tobacyk *et al.* 2011, p. 946). Describing the 'prosperity gospel' preached by several evangelical denominations, Stillman *et al.* (2012) wrote that 'religious and spiritual pursuits are not inimical to spending and wealth, but are explicitly linked to financial and materialistic rewards' (p. 6). This contrasts against the notions of harmony and submission espoused by Islam (Sarigöllü 2009). The doctrines of numerous faiths incorporate fatalistic perspectives. Expressions equivalent to 'God Willing' are found in Latin (*Deus Vult*) in reference to Catholicism and in Arabic (Inšā' Allāh) regarding Islam (Bloom and Blair 2002). Buddhism distinguishes fate from karma. The former denotes the inevitability of a chain of events (according to the master plan of a Supreme Being), whereas karma springs from intention (Chapple 1986). Unlike fate, karma is volitional; a consequence of the motives (good or bad) behind an action. Good deeds sow positive rewards whereas bad conduct reaps negative outcomes. Venkatesh (1995) contends that in Indian culture, spiritualism is not incompatible with materialism, 'instead they belong to the same realm of experience' (Gupta 2011, p. 253).

Frequently spanning ethnic groups, different faiths are often practised by members of the same ethnic group. Individuals vary in the intensity to which they internalize and practise religious-relevant aspects, depending on the motives underlying religious fulfillment. For instance, immigrants will often join congregations soon after their arrival for spiritual comfort, but also to obtain support for the difficult transition and to make in-group connections. Stillman *et al.* (2012) distinguish between intrinsically religious people (for whom faith is a fundamental part of their self-concept) and those practicing religion for external reasons (e.g. for social benefits). This explains equivocal findings on the relationship between religiosity and materialism. Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) and Stillman *et al.* (2012) reported reduced materialism among those with higher levels of spirituality. Cleveland and Chang (2009) reported an inverse (non-significant) relationship among first- (second-) generation Koreans, whereas Cleveland, Laroche and Hallab (2012b) documented positive relationships for both Muslim and Christian Lebanese. Contrary to their predictions, Tobacyk *et al.* (2011) reported similar materialism – for both success/centrality and happiness sub-dimensions – among Catholic Poles and chiefly Protestant Americans. These latter findings support the idea that materialism advances in places facing rapid social change, despite conflicting traditional values.

Ethnically salient consumers should presumably be more traditional and consequently, have greater immunity to external influences transmitting materialism. Then again, traditional societies tend to be collectivistic and this may foster materialism when the self-promotion component is understood to include in-group members in terms of achieving status and acquiring possessions for kith and kin. Ger and Belk (1990; Ger and Belk 1996b) believe that the Protestant work ethic is now stronger in certain developing nations and weaker in the post-industrial West. Ger and Belk (1996b) speculated that evolving social conditions enhances materialism. Cleveland and Chang (2009) found that materialism was higher among first-generation immigrants from a collectivist country (Korea) vs. their second-generation (Canadian-born) counterparts, even though the earlier generation predictably expressed higher Korean EID. They concluded that this was due to acculturative stress and anxiety of separation from their native land. As immigrants move away from their home country, a greater burden is laid upon material possessions to anchor EID and to fashion a new identity, 'especially when the move is voluntary and reflects upward social mobility' (Mehta and Belk 1991, p. 400). Crises of identity from acculturation pressures, and the relative anonymity of modern society, precipitate identity-seeking behaviours, whereby possessions compensate for an insecure identity or low self-esteem (Kasser 2002).

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To recap, materialism is not necessarily incompatible with traditional identity. Indeed, some authors maintain that materialism embodies a latent, universal human desire for material and status enrichment (Belk *et al.* 2003), although genetic research (Giddens *et al.* 2009) fails to support this explanation. As evidenced by the equivocal results, exactly how ethnicity and culture intertwine with materialism is still not well understood. This ambiguity arises from two interrelated issues: differences in the values underlying culture and EID, and differences ensuing from contact with external cultures.

Ethnic values and materialism

Cross-national investigations ordinarily omit scales for cultural phenomena. True cross-cultural studies integrate such measures, normally operationalized along dimensions denoting the guiding principles/standards and associated life goals (Rokeach 1973; Triandis 1994). These values underpin social arrangements and practices, and thus consumption-related attitudes and activities. Indeed, the bumper-sticker slogan opening this chapter is laden with value elements, commencing with 'He' (masculinity and individualism due to singular tense), 'the most' (dominance, epitomizing hierarchy) and concluding with 'wins' (mastery). The discussion centres on the connections of materialism to the typologies proposed by Hofstede (1991), Schwartz (1999) and Hall (1976).

The most fundamental distinction between societies concerns the respective roles of the individual vs. the group. Under *individualism*, people are supposed to take care of themselves and of their immediate family only. Persons adhering to this independent self-construal are 'individualist, egocentric, separate, autonomous, idiocentric, and self-contained' (Markus and Kitayama 1991, p. 226). Individualists' behaviours arise from cost/benefit calculations (Triandis *et al.* 1993). Consequently, they are susceptible to the rewards ensuing from personal effort and less disposed towards rewards reflecting the group. Individualists, according to Furnham (1984) should be more materialistic than collectivists, since becoming rich and obtaining material goods are desirable end-states for those questing for economic independence. Within individualistic societies, marketing caters to consumers' wishes for personal gratification, selection and novelty (Nakata and Sivakumar 2001). Roth (1995) confirmed that individualists have a proclivity for variety-seeking and hedonistic experiences. Moreover, asserting autonomy encourages individualists to desire materialistic objects that are consistent with the goal of self-differentiation (Watson *et al.* 2002).

Cultures high in *collectivism* emphasize group harmony, social order, loyalty and reputation (Hofstede 1991). In-groups and out-groups are more stable and concrete for collectivists. If individualists are stereotypically more materialistic then ethnic consumers with an interdependent self-construal should be less so, given their propensity to subordinate personal desires – especially when in conflict with the group – and presumably, their better capability to resist the materialistic appeals associated with the individualist West. Yet, as noted earlier, collectivists could be more materialistic when what is valued is the admiration and status accruing to kin and kind from possession ownership (Ger and Belk 1990). Collectivists' higher levels of generosity and willingness to share may encourage materialistic passion (Cleveland and Chang 2009). Employing Belk's (1985) materialism scale, Turan (2007, c.f. Karabati and Cemalcilar 2010) reported a positive link between collectivism and acquisition-centrality, and an inverse relationship between individualism and the success facet, though individualists did score higher on the happiness subscale.

Kagitcibasi (1997) contends that instead of representing fixed states or polar opposites, individualism-collectivism (I-C) simultaneously exist within the same person, with one or the other subject to context factors. Triandis and Gelfand (1998) alternatively proposed vertical and

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horizontal I-C components. Under vertical individualism (e.g., American society), an acute sense of competition with others underscores the motivation to distinguish oneself and acquire status. Under horizontal individualism (e.g., Swedish society), self-reliance and uniqueness are valued, although these are not necessarily obtainable through competition but rather through self-transcendence (Karabati and Cemalcilar 2010). Whereas personal goals are subordinated for both horizontal and vertical forms of collectivism (e.g., Israeli *kibbutz* and Korean society, respectively), people within the latter form are predisposed to 'support competitions of their in-groups with out-groups', and – unlike horizontal collectivists – they will yield to authorities if this is deemed necessary to achieve superiority over competing groups, even when the methods are seen extremely objectionable by in-group members (Triandis and Gelfand 1998, p. 119).

I-C resembles Schwartz's (1999) continuum of autonomy vs. conservativism. *Intellectual autonomy* portrays the appropriateness of personal freedom vs. embeddedness within the collectivity, in terms of the engagement of intellectual pursuits and the fostering ideas. *Affective autonomy* denotes the independent quest for pleasure and other emotionally positive experiences, presumably whetting material desire. With *conservativism*, individual needs are fulfilled by partaking in a shared way of life and striving towards communal aspirations, rather than pursuing personal outcomes that might conflict with the traditional order. Product choices, including luxuries, status markers and gifts, should closely reflect social norms; whereas idiosyncratic attitudes and tastes are liable to steer selection in less conservative circles (Wong and Ahuvia 1998).

Materialism's relationship to intellectual autonomy and conservativism is ambivalent. Conservativism can imply valuing material goods due to their historical significance (e.g., heirlooms, nostalgia) and their ability to render concrete intangible cultural values. Several of the sub-values associated with conservativism are clearly inconsistent with materialism (self-discipline, obedience, moderateness and devoutness), yet others are conducive (preservation of public image, reciprocation of favours and honouring parents/elders). Belk (1985) noted that traits associated with conservativism (e.g., Protestant work ethic) link to an aversion towards charitable acts, consistent with his non-generosity subscale. Connected to intellectual autonomy, people accrue status by exhibiting cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984), e.g., displaying comparatively rare customs. The value of aesthetic possessions partly stems from their capacity for social differentiation (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988). These private meanings could encourage materialism through the acquisition of products necessary to exhibit and perform cultural knowledge and rituals. As Belk (2000, p. 137) declares, the 'rise of global consumption ideals potentially makes the elite among Third World consumers into cosmopolitans who are more concerned with how they compare to the world's most privileged consumers than they are to compare themselves locally'. For impression management purposes, materialists may amass and display discretionary experiences similar to how they would exhibit possessions (Millar and Thomas 2009). Yet, versus their counterparts that have endured pecuniary scarcity, consumers who have consistently experienced affluence ought to have broader horizons. In line with Inglehart's (1990) *post-materialism theory* and consistent with striving for intellectual autonomy, they are motivated by abstract concerns (e.g., environmentalism, self-actualization) and less fixated on materialistic matters.

The context continuum advanced by the anthropologist Hall (1976) closely parallels the I-C divide. The explicit exchange of information is the chief purpose fulfilled by communication within *low-context* societies. Communication is principally for constructing and preserving in-group relationships within *high-context* cultures: 'most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message' (Hall 1976, p. 79). Individualistic societies typically speak low-context Germanic languages (e.g., English). High-context languages (e.g., Chinese, Arabic, Spanish)

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prevail within collectivistic societies. This has many marketing implications, especially regarding information search and advertising appeals. Germans prefer (low-context) detailed product-attribute facts when acquiring information in conjunction with an automobile purchase whereas their Italian counterparts favour (high-context) imagery and subjective allusions to car-usage situations (de Mooij 2004). High-context collectivists place greater reliance on word-of-mouth, interpersonal sources, whereas individualists favour explicit media information (Laroche *et al.* 2005). Cleveland *et al.* (2015) recently reported higher materialism among consumers living in high-context societies. This, the authors speculated, was partly due to global media exposure (promoting secular consumption values), which was also higher for respondents from high-context countries. Interestingly, these respondents outscored their low-context counterparts on the importance of preserving their EID.

To summarize, the individualist is predisposed towards materialism when consumption activities are connected to accomplishment/status for the self, whereas the collectivist is prone to materialism when conspicuous consumption achieves status for the (extended) family and other in-groups, provided that this orientation is not irreconcilable with in-group behavioural expectations and finds congruency with other core societal values. Whereas individualists crave material items consistent with the objective of standing apart from the crowd, the collectivist desires materialist objects enabling compliance with social expectations and favourable comparisons with others occupying similar status. The horizontal individualism of German society explains why Germans 'do not see material possessions as a distinguishing factor in social institutions of society' as much as their vertical-individualist American counterparts (Kilbourne *et al.* 2005, p. 638). Consistent with evaluation-apprehension theory, sensitivity to norms elevates materialism among collectivists if fellow members also embrace the same, especially within public settings.

Power distance (PD) associates with traditional notions of dominance, stratification and rigidity. Within high PD societies, superiors exhibit authoritarian tendencies and subordinates are expected to be passively obedient. Attempts to thwart the social order, dividing the 'haves' from the 'have-nots', are regarded harshly. These aspects impede susceptibility to outside cultural influences; however, they advance materialism by encouraging the display of goods to designate social stratification (Hofstede 1991; Roth 1995). Low PD cultures value fairness, equal opportunity and merit through ability, as well as initiative over birthright, nepotism and class (Nakata and Sivakumar 2001). Here, Roth (1995) argues that advertising appeals centred on social roles and ethic affiliation should be deemphasized.

Schwartz's second continuum is analogous to PD. *Hierarchy* emphasizes the pecking order and uneven distribution of resources; accepted as legitimate by societal members. The sub-values of social power, influence, wealth and authority are prominent within hierarchical societies, as are the virtues of humility and accepting one's place. *Egalitarianism* implies recognizing other societal members as moral equals and a concern for their prosperity and welfare. Conspicuous consumption is an obvious tactic to indicate one's relative standing within relatively misanthropic, hierarchical societies. Consumers pursuing status through consumption should be more sensitive to group opinions and apt to conform to in-group norms (Goldsmith and Clark 2012). Symbolic goods indicate the person's echelon within the social strata, relative to more egalitarian environments where such goods aid in expressing the person's unique, internal self (Wong and Ahuvia 1998).

Somewhat similar to hierarchy, traditional sex roles and male dominance are pronounced in *masculine* (MAS) societies; and mannish values/aims are stressed, e.g., boldness, achievement, as well as acquiring status, money and possessions (Nakata and Sivakumar 2001). Within such cultures (e.g., Japan), 'people consume for show' (de Mooij 2004, p. 35), whereas within *feminine* societies such as Denmark, consumption modesty is encouraged, and there is more of

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an emphasis on helping others, improving the quality of life and shunning self-recognition. At the national level, MAS and PD are strongly correlated (Hofstede 1991). Anchored by mastery and harmony, Schwartz's third continuum is conceptually similar. *Mastery* implies advancement through self-assertion and dominating the world; and, consistent with materialism, 'gaining control of objects and making them possessions is a key way of accomplishing this' (Belk 1985, p. 268). Self-direction, social recognition and accomplishment are embraced by societies emphasizing mastery. Products denoting social status are readily justifiable within cultures stressing ambition, achievement and audaciousness (Gutterman 2009). From an immigration standpoint, mastery implies successful integration with mainstream society, in terms of 'becoming adept at both its elements and relational rules' (Peñaloza 1994, p. 42). Societies positioned towards the opposite pole, *harmony*, espouse an ecumenical perspective towards the natural and social worlds. These ideals are not necessarily incompatible with individual autonomy; however self-enhancement objectives should not entail exploitation. Harmony can manifest for objects that 'allow aesthetic and physical awareness of the environment' (Watson *et al*. 2002, p. 925).

Cultures with high *Uncertainty Avoidance* (UA) (e.g., Greece) are aversive to new ideas, products, technologies and practices (Hofstede 1991), and place greater weight on word-of-mouth communications as a means of reducing risk (Nakata and Sivakumar 2001). To minimize ambiguity, UA societies adhere to strictly defined laws and measures. Globalization is fraught with uncertainty, in terms of breaking down barriers and reorganizing societies. Tensions arising from the intersection of different customs and modes of expression are acutely experienced by members of UA societies; leading to disorientation, apprehension about the future and perhaps xenophobia (Mau *et al*. 2008). According to Hofstede (1991), '[t]he more anxious cultures tend to be the most expressive cultures' (p. 115). He goes on to say that money (and what it buys) conveys extrinsic meaning. Empirical findings uphold the positive materialism–UA link (Cleveland 2007). Then again, because low UA societies have fewer formal rules, people are more tolerant of behaviours and ideals that differ from their own (Hofstede 1991), which could include materialism.

Confucian-dynamism (Hofstede 1991) is more commonly labelled *long-* versus *short-term orientation* (LTO vs. STO). STO societies attach importance to obligations and reciprocity, concern for face, etc. *Hyperbolic discounting theory* (Thaler 1981) refers to the general tendency of human beings to prefer rewards sooner rather than later, hence discounting the worth of the later reward. Materialistic gratification may be preferred within STO societies, even to the detriment of long-term goals (Hudders and Pandelaere 2011). Discounting should be moderate in LTO cultures. LTO societal members value thrift and perseverance, live within their means and save 'for a rainy day'. The pressure to keep up appearances is more pronounced among their STO counterparts; they may even overspend to maintain their social image (Cleveland 2007).

Beyond temporality, Yau (1988) delineated Chinese values stemming from Confucianism: spirituality (personal dignity ensuing from spiritual supremacy), face-saving (respectability and/or deference obtained from others, though one's position in the social network and by exhibiting behaviour befitting one's station), group orientation and power distance. Yang and Stening (2011) empirically examined materialism's association with these facets and Maoism (a political ideology epitomizing selflessness, extreme egalitarianism and complete renunciation of capitalistic society), conjecturing diminished materialism among Chinese valuing spirituality, group orientation and Maoism. Materialism, they argued, should be higher for those concerned with maintaining face and social status and, particularly, for those embracing post-Maoism ideology (espoused by Deng Xiaoping who famously said: 'To be rich is glorious', and 'It doesn't matter if a cat is black or white, so long as it catches mice' cited in Yang & Stening 2011, p. 443). As expected, materialism positively linked to power distance and post-Maoism, and negatively

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with subjective well-being. Contrary to hypotheses, face associated negatively with materialism. As China is drawn into the global capitalist system, 'the rhetoric of wealth as achievement . . . [supplants] the Confucian language of humility' (Wong and Ahuvia 1998, p. 428).

Researching twelve countries, Ger and Belk (1996b) resolved that materialism is neither exclusively Western, nor directly related to affluence, but is coupled with unsettled social conditions. A subsequent study reinforced these conclusions (Belk *et al.* 2003). Burroughs and Rindfleisch (2002) assert that materialism levels have plateaued within advanced (primarily individualistic) economies, whereas materialistic desires are escalating among emerging-market consumers (Sharma 2011). Consumers in advanced economies may be moving towards abstract post-material aspirations (Inglehart 1990); however, recent findings provide only equivocal support for this conjecture (Cleveland *et al.* 2009a).

Ethnic change and materialism

Identity positions are fluid and in motion: a product of reconciling the various acculturation factors facing individuals under different contexts (Askegaard *et al.* 2005). The nature and extent of culture change depends on situational factors encouraging or inhibiting socialization, including length of time in the host country, employment, residence (ethnic vs. mixed neighbourhood), marital status and lifecycle stage, etc. Furthermore, explicit and/or implicit institutional policies regarding immigration and ethnic minorities abet or hinder the expression of diversity. Because minority groups face the prospect of cultural assimilation, members are motivated to maintain solidarity with and patriotism towards the group(s) with which they identify most strongly, so that they and future generations can maintain their distinctive values and traditions (Cleveland and Chang 2009). Acquiring new traits does not mean inexorable desertion of ethnic traits. EID 'may be retained or even strengthened despite acculturation' (Cleveland *et al.* 2009b, p. 208). Contemporary theorists envisage multiple and more complex culture-change outcomes. The most prominent framework, promulgated by Berry (1997), describes four patterns from the permutation of two issues: (1) maintenance of original cultural identity/traits and (2) contact with, and participation in, the host culture.

Assimilation is when host traits steadily replace those of the original entity. Overshooting describes cases when the adopted behaviour extends beyond the host society (Stayman and Deshpandé 1989), transpiring when the immigrant craves mainstream acceptance and willingly disassociates from their original culture (Triandis 1994). At the other extreme lies *separation* (or segregation), when the individual actively refrains from participating in or adopting from the host – or is otherwise unable to engage with the alternate culture due to discrimination, prejudice or lingering animosity – in favour of ethnic affirmation. This can produce hyper-identification: zealous adherence to the values and behavioural norms of the original group exceeding levels found in the home country (Mehta and Belk 1991; Askegaard *et al.* 2005).

Marginalization implies disengagement from original and alternative cultural identities (e.g. counter-cultures). Ethnic attachment hinges partially on the perceived responses of mainstream members. Researching marginalized rural-to-urban migrants, Üstüner and Holt (2007) determined that those living in the deprived neighbourhoods experienced social stigmatism, which diminished ethnic identity and dignity. From a consumer behaviour standpoint, this pattern may reflect the lifestyles of ascetic individuals who eschew consumption except that required for survival. At the societal level, marginalization finds resonance with the past and current political ideologies of China (Maoism) and North Korea (Juche), respectively.

Integration describes blending without loss of distinction. Jamal (2003) explains how non-ethnic ties facilitate immigrants' exposure to unfamiliar products, which are adopted, then

modified to suit their tastes. This applies to mainstream cultures when they are permeated by outside influences, e.g., as a consequence of globalization (Cleveland *et al.* 2011c; Gillespie *et al.* 2010). For example, affluent, young urban Chinese consumers 'are shifting from collective values to greater individualism, and have aspirations of modernizing, but on their own terms' (Douglas and Craig 2010, p. 446). Mendoza and Martinez's (1981) framework differentiates between incorporation and transmutation (or creolization). The latter depicts hybridized social entities (and related artifacts and behaviours, e.g., hip-hop music, *Ganguro* subculture) forged over an indeterminate period of time from the amalgamation of cultural elements.

Consumer acculturation 'primarily focuses on cultural adaptation as manifest in the marketplace' (Peñaloza 1989, p. 111). Direct agents comprise family, peers and other reference groups; indirect agents include media, marketing and retail businesses (Lee and Tse 1994).[3] Peñaloza and Gilly (1999, p. 101) aver that marketers have their own culture, 'with values including initiative, consummating exchanges, competing, [and] making money'. Consumer culture amplifies the importance accorded to individual pursuits/desires and the escalation of consumer expectations (Ger and Belk 1996a), potentially to the detriment of ethnic and religious values. Emerging-market consumers are discounting utilitarian needs in favour of satisfying hedonic ideals and consigning priority to status symbols (Sharma 2011). Douglas and Isherwood (1979) proposed the envy theory of needs, essentially stating that *we want what others have*. This spreading ideology of desire is said to have its origins in modern American culture (Hirschman 1988; Belk *et al.* 2003), whereby the latter was shaped by a relative absence of a rigid class strata and a moderation of religious opposition towards conspicuous consumption (Wilk 1998).

Intercultural contact and cultural artifacts help to confirm identity. With a significance extending well beyond 'their utilitarian character and commercial value' (McCracken 1986, p. 71), consumer goods are cherished because of their implicit semiotic qualities that express social standing (Bourdieu 1984) and inclusion or exclusion with social groupings (Oswald 1999; Shrum *et al.* 2012). These objects substantiate otherwise intangible cultural meaning.

As migrants, immigrants are predisposed to be adaptive, and this presumably carries over to product adoption. Whether relocation is motivated by lifestyle, or for economic or socio-political reasons, it will impact the acculturation style as well as the absorption of materialistic values, ultimately having an effect on social well-being. The stress of adapting a new cultural environment may precipitate low self-esteem and insecurity. These psychological states have been associated with a materialistic orientation, insofar that possessing goods is envisaged as a means to achieving happiness (Hudders and Pandelaere 2011). Peñaloza (1989) proposed that 'uncertainty due to the effects of multiple role demands of multiple reference cultures may result in the accelerated adoption and conspicuous consumption of products associated with the new culture' (p. 112).

Most people hitherto lived their lives in accordance with parochial values and behavioural expectations. The perspective of culture change as a dichotomous process involving home/host cultural elements neglects to consider how contemporary global forces impel social transformation (Cleveland and Laroche 2007; Askegaard *et al.* 2005). Cultural intermingling now encompasses whole regions whereas previously it applied only to an echelon of global metropolises. Consumer acculturation theory needs revision to elucidate the 'contestations of cultural presence and meanings in an increasingly global arena' (Peñaloza 1994, p. 51).

Global consumer culture and materialism

Representing the implicit flattening of the planet into a single consciousness, globalization describes an uncoordinated process of accelerating and cumulative interactions of markets,

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companies and, increasingly, cultures and individuals (Robertson 1992). Globalization is championed as mechanism for pecuniary advancement, as Firat (1995, p. 110) describes:

> the most important thing in modernity was to expand the pie . . . so that all subjects could get a larger piece of the pie and thus take greater control over their material conditions and improve their lives. [. . .] In this society, the most important determinant, the all-important provider of the promised 'better life', was material wealth and accumulation.

Superseding nation-states, marketing, technology and globalization are coming together to level the economic playing field. The penetration of social spheres is equally noteworthy. Cultural adjustments arising from globalization are everywhere but incomplete, occurring at different speeds and magnitudes. Consumers living in emerging economies have felt these effects most intensely (Gupta 2011). The social-anthropological critique of globalization proceeds from *world-system theory* (Wallerstein 1989). This perspective portrays the asymmetry existing among social blocs: 'key conceptual pairs have been center (or core) and periphery, metropolis and satellite' (Hannerz 1992, p. 219). The core describes the leading cities of economically dominant countries while the periphery depicts the poorer regions and hinterlands. The power disparity favouring Western countries – above all, the United States – means that they disproportionately direct global cultural flows (Venkatesh 1995; Ger and Belk 1996a).

Globalization casts doubt on individuals' sense of self, identities and cultural belongingness (Arnett 2002). Four decades ago Bell insisted that ethnicity 'is best understood not as a primordial phenomenon in which deeply held identities have to reemerge, but as a strategic choice by individuals who, in other circumstances, would choose other group memberships as a mean of gaining some power and prestige' (1975, p. 171). Economic interests may supersede ethnicity observance unless the latter advances the former. Identity positions are dynamic, as the individual strives to reconcile the multiplicity of societal influences manifesting differentially across contexts (Askegaard *et al.* 2005). Individuals could adopt a hybridized identity or uphold independent identities; switching as suitable to the situation (Oswald 1999). EID and acculturation are seen here as malleable or mutable rather than fixed. Arnett (2002) contends that a growing number of people worldwide are to some extent bi-cultural, with one identity part derived from the local cultural narrative and the other extracted from global culture. Minorities may acculturate to the global consumer culture (GCC) to circumvent acculturation vis-à-vis the mainstream society, or draw upon their GCC knowledge to help them figure out the host culture (Cappellini and Yen 2012).

Presupposing that GCC is more materialistic (vis-à-vis territorially derived cultures), when and how does this orientation diffuse into mainstream and minority populations? Assuming GCC elevates individual aspirations, does this erode adherence to traditional, communal and religious values and in what ways across ethnic groups? Bouchet (1995, p. 93) explains that the cultural tensions experienced by minorities will increasingly play out among mainstream groups:

> What is happening in the subcultures of descendants of immigrants might well be harbingering the situation of many people on this planet who, confronted with the postmodern sources of identity making such as international marketing and satellite television and with the difficulties of political expression on a world market dominated by transnational companies, will have to define new ways of being persons and groups.

According to Firat, the result 'is a globalization of fragmentation in all respects. Poverty is everywhere, wealth and riches everywhere – America is in every country and every country

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in America' (1995, p. 116). Lévi-Strauss (1978) proposed that to the human mind, meaning ensues from the tensions of seemingly contradictory positions. His concept of binary *oppositions* is relevant to the internal conflicts underlying consumer desire in terms of the struggles between: secularism and faith, materialism and asceticism, and traditional affiliation and GCC. Numerous GCC conceptualizations are relevant to grasping the dissemination of materialism. The first stems from the proliferation of transnational corporations marketing consumer commodities (Levitt 1983). The second originates from the interdependencies among countries and the spread of global capitalism (Appadurai 1990). Global consumerism, the third angle, depicts the 'widespread and unquenchable desire for material possessions' (Ger and Belk 1996a, p. 275). The final viewpoint characterizes GCC as the homogenization of consumption patterns. GCC is 'a transnational set of cultural ideas and practices . . . inspired notably by U.S. consumer culture' (Askegaard *et al*. 2005, pp. 165–66). Studying Greenlandic immigrants living in Denmark, the authors invoke world-system theory to describe GCC radiating from the American centre to the Danish periphery. Respondents expressed overlapping social identities: traditional Greenlandic, mainstream Danish and GCC sources, which were variably resurrected or assumed subject to the consumption context. Cleveland and Laroche's (2007b) acculturation to GCC (AGCC) scale incorporates seven facets reflecting the drivers of GCC. The ensuing paragraphs describe each from the perspective of materialism.

Global mass media is predictably paramount as the chief agent diffusing GCC and materialism. The boundaries imposed by national frontiers are wearing down due to the pervasiveness of global media and programming (Hannerz 1992); principally from satellite television and the film industry, and joined nowadays by a virtual explosion in the number of internet-ready devices. The imagery broadcast facilitates the construction and sharing of GCC symbols (e.g., brands, lifestyles) and associated consumption-laden values (Alden *et al*. 1999; Ger and Belk 1996a; Walker 1996). Promoting self-indulgence and immediate gratification, media abet consumer desire for luxuries and other objects; valued more for their symbolic benefits than for their hedonic qualities. Researching the semiotic properties conveyed by media, Hirschman (1988) has this to say regarding the antagonist of Dallas, the hugely popular, syndicated 1980s American television show: 'J. R. Ewing not only acts, he consumes, and what he consumes tells us as much about him and about what he symbolizes as his actions do' (p. 346).

Theories regarding the role of media split into two perspectives. The *Frankfurt School* holds that consumers passively absorb media. Consumers attempt to emulate the individuals depicted and strive to satisfy the drives primed by the advertising appeals. Media with a worldwide presence are disproportionately Western, although Asian-based sources are growing swiftly. The excessive hedonism and preoccupation with social status characterizing programming depicts an exaggerated image of Western society (Ger and Belk 1996b). Emulation based on these stereotypes advances desire for luxury goods, possibly to the detriment of basic physiological safety and social needs (Ger and Belk 1996b; Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). Levitt's (1983) extreme stance avers that *exposure to the marketing activities of multinationals* will ultimately amalgamate everyone into a uniform GCC in which consumers purchase, use and value the same repertoire of products, permitting marketing strategies to be further standardized worldwide. As expressed by Steingard and Fitzgibbons (1995, p. 34):

> The values of Globalization, transmitted through satellite television and the distribution of worldwide publications, permeate everyone's life. Global marketing, international stock markets, and the availability of nomadic world-wide venture capital complete the scene for the rise of a global market value system. No culture is protected by topography, tradition or just plain disinterest – essentially nobody is out of reach of the extended arm of Globalization.

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The second viewpoint contends that consumers are active manipulators, selectively filtering programming and engaging in counter-argumentation. This perspective refutes convergence; rather, ethnic values and other distinctions are reasserted in response to globalization (de Mooij 2004). As Huntington (1993, p. 40–1) declared: 'Western efforts to propagate such ideas produce instead a reaction against "human rights imperialism" and a reaffirmation of indigenous values, as can be seen in the support for religious fundamentalism by the younger generation in non-Western cultures'. Ger (1999, p. 65) avows that 'consumers are returning to their roots, reconfiguring global goods and their meanings to better fit local culture and, especially, mixing the old and the new from disparate sources'. Waters (1995, p. 130) similarly claims that the social changes are likely more nuanced than Western cultural hegemony or utter rejection thereof, with tensions arising from the concurrence of cultural forces:

> the uneasy balance between the persistence of unique local cultural identities and the reshaping of such uniqueness by totalizing transnational cultural influences ranging from Coca-Colarization to the universalisation of western ideological and political concepts.

The debate continues as to whether advertising is the cause of materialism or merely intensifies it (Belk 1985). Marketing channels convey meaning transfer: overtly and clandestinely disseminating cultural signs, values and behavioural norms (McCracken 1986; Peñaloza and Gilly 1999). Materialism can be primed by advertising, and triggered by cues embedded in the purchasing, consumption and social environments. Adverts persuade us that 'we will be happier, that our lives will become somehow more satisfying – if we accumulate more and more things' (Swinyard, Kau and Phua 2001, p. 27). Don Draper, the fictional protagonist of the Sterling-Cooper Advertising Agency explains:

> Advertising is based on one thing: happiness. And do you know what happiness is? Happiness is the smell of a new car. It's freedom from fear. It's a billboard on the side of a road that screams with reassurance that whatever you're doing is OK.
>
> [Advertising] creates an itch. You simply put your product in there as a kind of . . . calamine lotion.[4]

Changing consumption values mirror shifting advertising appeals, and the most striking changes have occurred within emerging markets. The prominence of utilitarian appeals (i.e. satisfying basic physiological and safety needs) has given way to emphasizing the social and hedonic consumption values fulfilled by products (Tse *et al.* 1989). These latter ideals are characteristic of GCC (Alden *et al.* 1999).

Tourism lists among the world's largest industries; directly or indirectly employing 10 per cent of the world's labour force (Graddol 2000). Relaxing barriers, cost reductions and increasing pecuniary resources encourage mobility; escalating the incidence of intercultural contacts, the transmission of GCC and, its lingua franca, English. While satisfying hedonistic motives, tourists normally confine their experiences to aesthetically pleasing situations, which may warp their perceptions of material abundance (similar to drawing lifestyle impressions TV programming), whetting consumer desire. Belk (1985) found that people scoring highly on the possessiveness dimension of materialism tended to be avid travellers. He surmised that travelling episodes represented accumulating experiences, which is analogous to acquiring possessions. Displaying material goods acquired from abroad is a strategy used by migrants to accentuate social status.

Language is a framework for organizing social activities and interpretations (Hall 1976). In 1780 the world contained fewer than 13 million English speakers (Belich 2009); today a third

of the planet speaks or is learning English (Graddol 2000).[5] English is the lingua franca of international business and institutions, sciences, media and thus, GCC (Huntington 1996). Even in places where few speak the language, English appears in advertisements, symbolically denoting modernism, sophistication and upward mobility (Alden *et al.* 1999).

Cleveland and Laroche (2012) conceive *cosmopolitanism* as a learnable disposition:

> reflecting a specific set of values, opinions, and competencies held by certain individuals; specifically a genuine, humanitarian appreciation for, desire to learn from, and ability to engage with, peoples of different cultures; in short, an affinity for cultural diversity and the proclivity to master it.
>
> *(p. 55)*

Tourists are simply cultural spectators, whereas cosmopolitans actively interface with discrete social entities and serve as conduits for conveying external values. Global media fosters this disposition, discounting the need for foreign travelling (Hannerz 1992). Cosmopolitanism has been described as a secular force and as a taste orientation. Cosmopolites demonstrate luxurious cultural capital (Ong 2009) by virtue of their skill at decoding foreign symbols. Displaying the accoutrements and rituals of foreign cultures enhances social standing (Thompson and Tambyah 1999).

A dissenting view considers cosmopolitanism a post-materialism value. Cosmopolites accord higher priority to achieving intellectual autonomy associated with self-transcendence (vs. self-enhancement), which is antithetical to materialism (Cleveland *et al.* 2011a). Cosmopolitanism correlates with education, which also fosters post-materialistic values (Cleveland and Laroche 2012a). The less tangible, experiential consumption cherished by cosmopolitans may supplant or – consistent with the hedonism typifying affective autonomy – reinforce materialistic predilections.

Cleveland and Laroche's (2007b) sixth dimension was labelled *openness to GCC*. Globalization disseminates themes, ideologies and aspirations, which are selectively adopted by individuals worldwide (Robertson 1992). Individuals are seduced by experiences and marketplace objects (e.g., the iPhone) serving as points of common reference to the consumer culture conveyed by global media (Appadurai 1990; Alden *et al.* 1999; Walker 1996). Luxury brands 'like Vuitton purses fulfill the need to conform . . . teenage girls want Vuitton because "everyone has it"' (de Mooij 2004, p. 163). Materialism is instrumental for building and strengthening relationships among initiates and members of consumer tribes (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). As Oswald (1999, p. 310) states, 'consumers cruise the malls to go "lifestyle shopping" . . . to acquire the outward signs of culture for a lack of a more permanent identity'. Wee (1999) reported that young Asian consumers eagerly embrace a lifestyle reflecting such Western ideals as individualism, competition, self-indulgence and cynicism. Other research identifies global segments regarding advertising appeals, fashion and lifestyle traits (Cleveland *et al.* 2011c; Alden *et al.* 2006; Zhou and Belk 2004; Belk *et al.* 2003).

Globalization amplifies the role played by the marketing system in shaping consumer identity (Bouchet 1995). Following *social identity theory* (Tajfel and Turner 1986), *self-identification with GCC* extends beyond experimentation with the symbols of global culture. As with EID, a strong global identity affects members' thoughts, values and behaviours. Global consumers act out their lives according to the belief structures intrinsic to GCC, drawing products from the global bazaar to fashion and express this self-affirmation, and to distinguish themselves from the local masses. This phenomenon is more likely among younger consumers (due to incomplete identities or generation gap perceptions) and among sub-groups experiencing a sense of exclusion from (or conversely, feeling superiority towards) mainstream society, due to their occupation, class/caste, or race/ethnicity/religion. Xenocentrism – the perception that one's

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local/ethnic culture is inferior to the culture of the out-group (e.g., global culture) – is thought to be more prevalent among citizens of developing countries (Ger and Belk 1996a; Ger and Belk 1990; Batra *et al.* 2000).

Empirical findings

Concerning materialism's association with EID and AGCC, Cleveland *et al.* (2013) surveyed consumers living in the Americas, Europe and Asia. Robust support emerged for the proposition that AGCC drives materialistic values. The positive correlation obtained for the overall sample on the composite AGCC construct replicated across all eight country sub-samples. Most constituent AGCC dimensions linked positively with materialism; although merely speaking more English did not, which was positively associated only among French-speaking Canadians. Consistent patterns emerged for global mass media and self-identification with GCC: these constructs' relationships to materialism were strongly positive for all countries. Likewise, the link between materialism and exposure to multinational marketing was significantly positive overall, and for seven countries. These results testify to the power of media and marketing to transmit materialistic values, especially regarding the ubiquity of American media conveying GCC values and promoting identification with GCC. With positive links uncovered for five countries, materialism was reinforced via first-hand intercultural encounters (travelling abroad); and, for a subset of samples, through openness to GCC (four countries) and exposure to European global media (also four countries).

Mixed results emerged for the relationship of materialism to ethnic identity. The linkage was non-significant overall (aggregate data), yet was positively significant in four countries. In no case did materialism negatively link to the composite EID factor. Across the countries, almost all the significant links uncovered for the sub-facets of EID to materialism were positive. This clearly demonstrates that cultural traditions are compatible with materialism, and debunks the notion that GCC is solely responsible for the spread of acquisitive tendencies. This was particularly true for interpersonal relationships with fellow ethnic members, whereby positive associations with materialism emerged in four countries. Identification with/desire to maintain local culture positively associated with materialism in three countries (and negatively in only one country). For two cases local language use positively associated with materialism; only for French-speaking Canadians was the relationship negative. Local media usage positively related to materialism in two countries. Studying Korean Canadians, Cleveland and Chang (2009) reported a strong positive relationship between materialism and ethnic media exposure for first-generation (Korean-born) immigrants, but this finding was not sustained for their second-generation (Canadian-born) counterparts. The authors' finding of a positive relationship between materialism and overall (Korean) EID was replicated in a study of ethnic Lebanese living in Lebanon, but only for the Christian sub-sample, whereas for Muslims the link was insignificant (Cleveland *et al.* 2012). Research on Japanese consumers – a collectivistic society – found a positive link between EID and materialism (Cleveland *et al.* 2009c), which was considerably stronger in magnitude than the relationship between AGCC and materialism. Another study revealed a positive link between materialism and Iranian EID; here, the magnitude was slightly lower than that observed between materialism and AGCC (Cleveland *et al.* 2011b).

Individual differences

The nature of materialism and ethnicity is also informed by demographic variables, including: length of residency, generation, education, income, social class, occupation and gender. Income is

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confounded by social class, wealth, age, education, family size and purchasing power. Within Western countries, individuals typically achieve their peak earnings during their fifth decade; however, older (vs. younger) individuals tend to be relatively less materialistic (Keillor, d'Amico and Horton 2001). This explains the lack a significant relationship between materialism and income reported in numerous studies (Cleveland *et al.* 2009a; Richins and Dawson 1992; Belk 1985; Ger and Belk 1996b). Regarding gender, males are said to employ conspicuous consumption to signal success, with the goal of attracting females (Stillman *et al.* 2012). Gender differences in materialism are documented (Gupta 2011; Cleveland *et al.* 2009a), yet these findings are equivocal across ethnic groups. Parental guidance and family structure affects the socialization of children, and elevated materialism evidences among children of divorced parents (Rindfleisch *et al.* 1997).

Individual-level values and other idiosyncratic differences also combine with social factors to foster materialism. Personality traits associated with conformity that encourage materialism include: susceptibility to interpersonal influence, need for uniqueness, opinion-seeking and self-monitoring.[6] Schwartz's (1992; 1999) value inventory contains ten motivationally distinct and universal values applicable at the individual level, and studies have linked some of these values to materialism (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Karabati and Cemalcilar 2010; Kilbourne *et al.* 2005). Cleveland *et al.* (2012b) reported numerous differences between Muslim and Christian Lebanese on the relationship of materialism to these values. Whereas *power* (*benevolence*) was strongly positively (negatively) associated for both groups, *hedonism* was positively linked only for Christians. *Tradition* (*universalism* and *self-direction*) was (were) inversely associated to materialism only for Christians (Muslims).

Studying Turks, Karabati and Cemalcilar (2010) reported positive relationships of *power*, *achievement* and *hedonism* to materialism; although the strength of these linkages varied across the subscales (happiness, success and centrality: Richins and Dawson 1992). Contrary to expectations, they documented a positive effect of tradition on the success facet; which the authors suggest, points towards a less austere, more status-driven form of conservativism. Elaborating the complexity of these individual-social interactions and materialistic outcomes is delegated to future authors.

Consumption contexts and culture

Schwartz (1992) holds that although values steer consumption behaviour, these should not be context-specific. However, the earlier review of ethnicity and acculturation implies that the prominence and behavioural outcomes of materialism are dependent on the situation, rather than absolute. Products operate as dramaturgical props that define and display the consumer's self-image, and the particular social role that is operational (Oswald 1999; Bouchet 1995), which brings into play different reference groups. Ethnic awareness and the salience of other groups can be inconstant, activated in part by verbal/visual cues (e.g., propinquity of other culturally similar/dissimilar individuals, ethnic holidays and religious events, and cultural signals present within advertising), coinciding with purchasing and consumption settings (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001). Moreover, private and public self-concepts co-exist and the researcher must reflect on which aspect(s) of the self will dominate in different social circumstances (Triandis 1994; Wong and Ahuvia 1998).

Peñaloza's (1994) research on Mexican American immigrant acculturation found that readily adopted products were low in cost but high in visibility. Traditional consumption behaviours revealed when celebrating ethnic heritage and familial ties, whereas consumer acculturation readily occurred with culturally inert activities. Askegaard *et al.* (2005) described how marketplace

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offerings enabled Greenlandic-Danish immigrants to resurrect ethnic traditions. This supports Firat's (1995) argument that the persistence of cultural forms is contingent upon rendering traditions into consumable forms, and Bouchet's (1995) assertion that ethnicity in the contemporary period is primarily about responding to social change, whereas beforehand it was a mechanism for avoiding it.

The meanings incorporated into material goods can also be dynamic (McCracken 1986). Certain objects assume static meanings, e.g., heirlooms symbolize continuity, religious artifacts denote spirituality. Others, including branded products, assume different meanings to both the same and different people, across time and place (Kleine and Baker 2004). Evoking cultural values, Watson *et al.* (2002) give the example of how conservativism and mastery engender equivalent importance to an antique Hamilton pocket watch for different, often private, meanings. Regarding the former, the watch is valued for symbolizing family ties and heritage; whereas for the latter, the significance derives from the object's prestige and capacity to enhance self-concept. Likewise, whereas someone might value a bicycle for enhancing athletic prowess (an expression of mastery), another person might value the object for providing the sensory pleasures associated with experiencing, via leisurely bikerides, the natural environment (thus, harmony; Watson *et al.* 2002). Because cultural values affect self-image – which is partly the product of how others see the individual as well as the person's perceptions of themself – these values have some bearing on the individual's selection and definition of their most important belongings (Markus and Kitayama 1991). To the bearer, consumer goods infuse with symbolic properties incorporating social (and economic) risk. Reference group influence is not equally powerful for all types of information, products and consumption contexts. Also, the role(s) of different social power bases (referent, legitimate, expert, etc.) vary according to the situation.

Materialism is also triggered by retailing cues. Copious inventories, numerous brand choices, category assortments and the full shopping carts of other customers signal material abundance and convey impressions regarding the social acceptability of consumer desire. People weave in and out of a materialistic orientation and therefore, materialism influences certain behaviours but not others. Where a relationship exists, it is usually, but not always, positively valenced.

Karabati and Cemalcilar (2010) speculate that high materialists engage in consumption that publically signals status, whereas low materialists are apt 'to value private meanings of possessions . . . [such as] books, memorabilia, and other possessions displayed privately rather than in public' (p. 631). Luxuries are the category of products most obviously associated with materialism. In addition to satisfying hedonic needs, luxuries are purchased for symbolic reasons, to promote idiosyncratic expression and invidious distinction, to convey personal success and status and so forth. Several authors have cogitated about cultural differences concerning the motives underlying luxury consumption. Wong and Ahuvia (1998) proposed that individualist Western consumers accord importance to achieving hedonic experiences, whereas collectivist Asians – with their enhanced concern for 'face' – stress publically visible possessions. Clothing, jewellery and other wearables signify personality, ethnic affiliation, occupation and social status; possibly communicating intentions regarding a particular situation.

In their eight-country study, Cleveland *et al.* (2009a) reported that for the aggregated dataset, materialism was a significant predictor for most of the forty-eight consumption behaviours considered, and the relationship was positive in all but two cases (Appendix 10.1). Materialism's role was pronounced for the consumption of luxury goods, apparel, consumer electronics and applicances. Materialism also linked positively with media and communication behaviours. Yet, the magnitude (and sometimes, direction) of these relationships varied considerably across nations. The most consistent findings ensued for hedonistic, socially visible and status-enhancing consumer objects: luxuries, media devices, durables and appliances. In all but one country,

automobile ownership was a positive function of materialism. On the other hand, purchasing athletic shoes positively linked with materialism in some countries, but the relationship was negative one country (Korea). These and other inconsistent findings are probably due to cultural differences in product meaning as well as the norms guiding the satiation of materialism.

The results demonstrate that cultural homogenization is not the inevitable outcome of marketplace globalization. When consumer goods are introduced, the recipient society modifies the meaning of these objects in ways that can enhance or compliment rather than diminish existing cultural identity (Akaka and Alden 2010; Miller 1996; Hannerz 1992). Increasingly, consumers in affluent societies are curious about foreign cultures, cuisines and products; whereas some studies point to a revival of localism in the consumption habits of those living in less prosperous environs (Ger 1999). Describing the evolution of habits in Romania following the overthrow of Ceaușescu, Belk (1996) stated that despite the influx of Western brands, media and other influences, 'significant differences in foods, clothing, religion, vehicles, and celebrations act as ethnic markers that are used by the Romanian majority and the Hungarian and Gypsy minorities to proclaim their ethnic identities and thereby resist assimilation to each other, much less to global culture' (p. 26).

Levitt (1983) foretold inexorable cultural convergence and synchronization of attitudinal/behavioural outcomes. Certain segments (e.g., global teens) may embrace a lifestyle congruent with GCC while spurning local norms (Alden *et al.* 1999). De Mooij (2004) counters that unique cultural affiliations and predilections are not waning: 'the spread of global symbols . . . does not necessarily include homogeneity of people's habits or values' (p. 4). Juxtaposing with affirmation to traditional identities, globalization produces marketplace tensions; e.g., deliberating between local/foreign product alternatives. Ethnic members strive to maintain identity and pride towards their ethnic heritage. This entails adhering to cultural customs/values and enculturating these aspects into their offspring (Mehta and Belk 1991).

The allure of *neoethnicism* partly stems from its reductivism (Miyoshi 1993), and assumes greater salience in the current, perplexingly intricate phase of globalization. Social identity theory posits that when individuals encounter complex social environments, they will search out and identify with the group that they feel most at ease (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Supposed cultural encroachment or economic vulnerability motivates compels certain individuals to 'promote a resurgence of, and renewed commitment to, indigenous cultures' (Huntington 1996, p. 37); and perhaps eschew global influences and associated media/marketing, and abstention of foreign products. Modernization and economic expansion is not interchangeable with cultural Westernization. Foreign products, ideas and even values are indigenized. Researching consumer acculturation in Belize, Wilk (1995) found that the adoption of foreign behaviours was highly selective, and in certain instances, consumers reacted strongly against Western standards. Partaking in rituals and consuming symbolic products help establish group solidarity. One corollary is that minorities may develop exaggerated perceptions of the importance/quality of brands emanating from their original country, as they strive to affirm their traditional identity (Guzmán and Paswan 2009).

How do consumers reconcile manifold value systems, particularly if one ethos is conducive to materialism while the other is hostile? One way that these ambivalent feelings are revealed is through *consumer ethnocentrism* (CET).

> [Ethnocentrism] represents the universal proclivity for people to view their own group as the center of the universe, to interpret other social units from the perspective of their own group, and to reject persons who are culturally dissimilar while blindly accepting those who are culturally like themselves.
>
> *(Shimp and Sharma 1987, p. 280)*

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CET specifically refers to individuals' penchant towards local products, and aversion to foreign alternatives, which are seen as perilous to the in-group economy and culture. Ethnocentric consumers will even forfeit the higher quality or lower prices offered by foreign goods so as to 'enjoy the psychological benefit of avoiding contact with the out-group' (Steenkamp *et al.* 2003, pp. 56–7). CET alternatively denotes compliance to injunctive norms. A person might stifle their private preference towards a foreign product in light of perceived reference group pressure to select the domestic/ethnic alternative (Rawwas *et al.* 1996).

Norms critically impact behaviour, but prognosticating the nature of influence requires specifying the type(s) apt to be operational in a given context. Descriptive norms denote typical behaviours (what is *usually* done), whereas injunctive norms signify morally appropriate behaviours (what *ought* to be done) as defined by society (Cialdini *et al.* 1990). It is also helpful to distinguish between prescriptive norms (dictating what people *should* do) and proscriptive norms (decreeing what people *should not do*; Argyle *et al.* 1985). The extent to which a societal member is motivated to conform to social expectations (gaining approval by imitating others or affirming norms) and to avoid disapproval from the group – risking sanctions for violating values and deviating from accepted norms – independently or jointly affect the degree that materialistic temptations are embraced or suppressed.

Because many ethnocentric consumers, especially those acquiescing to in-group norms, still desire materialistic objects, local/ethnic options will be sought to fulfill acquisitive needs, assuming that conspicuous consumption does not openly violate cultural sensibilities. Support for this contention emerged in Cleveland *et al.*'s (2009a) study, which revealed an independent link between CET and materialism in most countries examined. CET positively predicted numerous consumer behaviours prototypically thought of as satisfying hedonic and status needs, including several luxuries, consumer electronics, appliances and durables. Relevant for product positioning, a four-fold classification was suggested based on the combined influence of materialism and CET (Table 10.1). Still, ethnocentrism does not always drive preferences for local/ethnic brands over foreign/host alternatives. Consumers may perceive local brands as more responsive to their unique in-group needs. Traditional ethnic consumers may also spurn brand options that explicitly emphasize status or hedonism in their promotional appeals (Cleveland and Laroche 2012a).

Table 10.2 summarizes the principal linkages of materialism to ethnic identity, cultural values and acculturation.

Implications and conclusions

Researching materialism

Despite the abundant materialism literature, few studies focus on the consistency and drivers across countries/cultures. This is a glaring oversight, given the pervasiveness of materialistic-laden

Table 10.1 Materialism, consumer ethnocentrism, and consumer behavior

		Materialism	
		*Negative**	*Positive*
Consumer ethnocentrism	*Negative**	Necessity consumption	Hedonistic-global consumption
	Positive	Traditional consumption	Hedonistic-local consumption

Source: Adapted from Cleveland *et al.* (2009a).

Note
*or not significant.

Table 10.2 Summarizing ethnicity and materialism relationships

Antecedent variable/construct	*Relationship to materialism*	
Ethnic identity (EID)	▲▼	Depends on whether materialism is acceptable to fellow ethnic group members, within a given situation. Perceptions differ across ethnicities due to cultural traditions, interacting with religion and attitudes towards upward mobility, majority vs. minority ethnicity status, demographics, consumption situational effects (e.g., public vs. private consumption), etc.
Religiosity	▼	An orientation towards consumption fundamentally conflicts with most forms of religious fulfillment.
High (vs. low) context	▲▼	Low-context communication may explicitly reference materialistic values, although symbolism present in high-context communication may covertly convey materialistic appeals (e.g., status-marking objects).
Hofstede's dimensions		
• Individualism	▲▼	Acquiring goods is consistent with individual pursuits; collectivists can be materialistic when benefits of status/possessions accrue to family/group.
• Power distance	▲	Status goods reinforce power/wealth differences.
• Uncertainty avoidance	▲	Consumer goods help to anchor identity under ambiguous situations and social upheaval.
• Masculinity	▲	Agentic needs, e.g., material enrichment, are emphasized in masculine societies; feminine cultures are comparatively communally oriented.
• Long-term orientation	▼	Time horizon affects consumption priorities, i.e., delaying gratification vs. satisfying immediate, hedonic needs.
Schwartz's cultural values		
• Harmony	▼	Symbiotic societies less likely engage in exploitive consumption as well as restrain consumer envy and the display of status markers.
• Egalitarianism	▼	The importance of status markers should be muted in relatively classless societies.
• Intellectual autonomy	▲▼	Advanced as a post-materialistic value, self-actualization is also consistent with the enhancement of cultural capital, which encourages materialism via flaunting social sophistication.
• Affective autonomy	▲	The pursuit of hedonistic experiences is coherent with the belief that material goods are instrumental to achieving happiness and fulfillment.
• Mastery	▲	Similar to achieving control over the environment, mastery implies command over (conspicuous evidence of) resources.
• Hierarchy	▲	As with power distance, conspicuous consumption expresses one's place in the social hierarchy.
• Conservativism	▲▼	Conforming to ethnic traditions could suppress or encourage materialistic tendencies depending on social norms and consumption context.

(continued)

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Table 10.2 (continued)

Antecedent variable/construct	Relationship to materialism	
Acculturation		
• Host society	▲▼	Depends in part on whether expressions of materialism are embraced or frowned upon by mainstream/host cultural entity in a given consumption situation, and host society attitudes towards the acculturating group.
• Global consumer culture (AGCC)	▲	This ideology of consumption aggressively promotes consumer desire. Globalization and culture change links with rising materialism.
Consumer ethnocentrism	▲▼	Ethnocentric consumers shun outside cultural influences; however, they still place value on material enrichment for conveying social status.

Note
▲ = increasing/positive, ▼ = reducing/negative.

product appeals, and the awareness that cultural forces fundamentally shape consumer behaviour. As nations converge along socio-economic indicators, cultural variables take on greater significance for explaining consumer variability (de Mooij 2004). There is a dearth of research on societies characterized as culturally distant from the West: Africa, much of Asia, Latin America, etc. These neglected regions represent almost 90 per cent of the world's populace and most of its future economic growth. Conducting research into these regions 'requires both understanding and sensitivity to differences in the marketing environment as well as an ability to deal with the lack of a well-developed market research infrastructure' (Craig and Douglas 2001, p. 84); and requires the employment of instruments that are 'readily understood and unambiguously interpreted, and, as far as possible, devoid of cultural bias' (p. 85).

Many studies suffer because the treatment of culture is exploratory, lacking a priori specification of the influence it will take. Innovative uses of and novel meanings for products/brands strengthens the need for emic (anthropological) research approaches. Acculturation processes are difficult to describe with quantitative methodologies. Longitudinal and qualitative designs enable documentation of the dynamic evolution of identity, culture change and materialism (Askegaard *et al.* 2005). The *Diderot effect* (McCracken 1988) implies that it is necessary to research consumption constellations: the meaning ensuing from the interaction of complimentary consumer possessions. Consumer values and lifestyles are revealed when objects are assessed in concert. The beneficial insights offered by such approaches must be balanced against the inability to generalize. The nature of identity varies across ethnic groups, further complicating etic cross-cultural comparisons of materialism. Most consumer research employs the individual as the unit of analysis; however many decisions are made at the household level. This requires insights into decision-making and gender roles within families, which also vary across ethnic groups.

Hofstede's data – drawn from *IBM* employees – dates from the 1960s onwards. Scores may have shifted, especially within societies experiencing economic change or sustaining high immigration. Cultural indices are limited by their aggregation. Within-country variation is often as great as between-country differences. Most marketing research positioned as cross-cultural is essentially cross-national. Ethnicity and nationality are not interchangeable concepts. Many nation-states are multi-ethnic: aggregated country-sample data obscures individual-level discrepancies as well as regional and subcultural differences. The ecological fallacy (Robinson 1950) occurs when inferences are made about the nature of individuals based upon aggregate-level data findings. This error is the bane of deductive quantitative research, whereas inductive,

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qualitative methodologies risk the exception fallacy (Damer 2012), whereby group conclusions are confounded because they are based on exceptional/anecdotal cases. These issues inform as to the brevity (Cleveland *et al.* 2011c) of ethnicity-based segmentation relative to more objective demographic and/or country-level approaches, despite ample theoretical justification and practical significance for utilizing ethnicity to craft marketing strategy.

The literature upholds the superior psychometric properties of Richins' (2004) material values scale vs. Belk's (1985) trait-based scale. Studies employing either scale report deviations from the posited tripartite structure, and several report issues regarding the interpretation of negatively valenced statements, especially when translated (Cleveland and Chang 2009; Wong *et al.* 2003; Tobacyk *et al.* 2011; Karabati and Cemalcilar 2010). Cross-cultural validation requires assessing equivalence in the meaning and structure of construct measures (i.e. measurement invariance; Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998). Researchers must also be on guard for elements or manifestations of materialism unique to a particular culture, and avoid pseudo-etic operationalizations whereby measures developed in one cultural context are applied with only minimal adaptation (i.e., translation) to others without due consideration of social and behavioural context-effects (Triandis 1994). To clarify materialism's effects on personal and social well-being, it would be advantageous to develop a materialism scale conceptualized from a motivational perspective; one that distinguishes between instrumental and terminal functions, and that is reliable/valid across ethnic groups, social contexts and consumption circumstances.

Practical implications

As economies become affluent, advertising appeals shift from primarily utilitarian themes towards emphasizing hedonistic values (Tse *et al.* 1989). Rising materialism augers well for globally branded luxuries seen as universal symbols of social status. For most other products, product attributes and appeals require modification to fit into existing consumer values. Global advertising 'can only be effective if there are global consumers with universal values' (de Mooij 2004, p. 16). Demirbag *et al.*'s (2010) findings indicated that materialism moderated the relationship between country image and preferences for local vs. foreign products; however this relationship varied across product categories. Increasing discretionary income enables greater freedom of expression; nevertheless, articulations of social identity and manifestations of materialism are shaped principally by or in reaction to value systems. Jamal (2003) described the crucial role played by ethnic marketers in terms of providing the 'emotional glue' that binds members to their original culture, in contrast to mainstream marketers' activities that encourage integration into the consumer culture.

The challenge facing managers of global status brands is to sustain consumer desire. Sony and Cadillac once had the brand insistence levels currently enjoyed by Apple and BMW. The majority of status brands are unlikely to achieve such universal appeal as social markers, even ephemerally. Because consumption unfolds within socio-cultural circumstances, the connotation of materialism will often be dissimilar across cultures (Venkatesh 1995; Cleveland *et al.* 2009a). Certain products/brands may be deemed materialistic/hedonistic in one culture, but not in another. What one group deems as impeccable taste may be gaudy or ostentatious for another. *Symbolic self-completion theory* (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982) avers that goods allow for substantiating or innovating identity, through selective use and experimentation with existing cultural meanings (e.g., the juxtaposition of clothing materials in unconventional ways). Episodes of meaning re-contextualization emerge as ethnic members' negotiate between traditional and host cultural spheres (Oswald 1999).

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Existing international market segmentation information tends to be organized from the nation-state perspective. This is poorly diagnostic for uncovering transnational or intranational segments, which – as is the case with domestic environments – are likely to be specific to particular product categories (Cleveland *et al.* 2011c; Jamal 2003). The ethnic fragmentation occurring at the societal level is paralleled by identity fragmentation occurring at the individual consumer level. Analogous to the tossed-salad metaphor, and drawing from Bouchet's (1995) concept of *bricolage*, each individual is a mosaic: a blend of various cultural pieces that can be ill-fitting due to incompatibility amid the constituent values, competing ethnic norms and marketing messages prescribing acceptable behaviour. Research is necessary to illuminate how, where, when and for whom this amalgam of identities fuses over time, leading to creolization, and to identify factors encouraging oscillation between identities. Ethnicity is 'not just who one is but how one feels in and about a particular situation' (Dion *et al.* 2011, p. 311). Managers seeking to exploit materialistic desire must recognize the circumstances favouring the dominance of ethnic/national vs. other/global identities and vice-versa, and to tailor brand strategies to suit the values/dispositions operating under these contexts. When taken together, the possible outcomes of materialistic goal pursuits are legion across times, places and individuals, depending on a complex interchange of cultural norms, socialization forces and marketing intermediaries, further interacting with personality, other individual differences and aspirations.

Social implications and conclusions

Members of mainstream Western (vs. emerging-market) societies are likely socialized earlier in life to consumerism. Consequently, they may be somewhat inoculated to overt materialistic appeals, or possess an enhanced capacity to restrain materialistic urges. Negative affect (anxiety, unhappiness, depression, etc.), compulsive buying and a host of other risky behaviours have been positively linked with materialistic dispositions, whereas several intrinsic pursuits seen as beneficial to subjective well-being – such as social participation and self-actualization – have been inversely associated with materialism.[7] Conversely, Hudders and Pandelaere (2011) surmise that consuming luxuries leads to happiness when individuals believe that conspicuous consumption 'provides them with a higher status, not only within their own reference groups but also within their aspirational groups' (p. 416). Regardless, the direction of causality remains ambiguous: 'it is also possible that those who have for various reasons experienced dissatisfaction in life turn to materialism in their effort to find happiness' (Belk 1985, p. 274). Despondency may result from the trials and prejudice facing ethnic minorities. Immigrants employed in jobs for which they lack intrinsic motivation (insufficiently engaging tasks, etc.) could have a greater susceptibility towards extrinsic, materialistic-laden rewards.

Drawing from the concepts discussed herein, there is a plethora of issues warranting enquiry. Regarding immigration and ethnic minority groups, what situations (e.g., migration motives, ethnic stigmatization) exacerbate or alleviate instrumental and terminal forms of materialism? How do cultural values work in concert to affect materialism, and how does materialism manifest when different ethos intersect, under varying social situations and consumption contexts? What forms of materialism drive or are reinforced by the multifarious gift-giving behaviours across ethnic groups and cultural norms (reciprocity, etc.) for different occasions? Does materialism occur when social needs are reasonably satiated, or develop as a substitute for interpersonal relationships? What acculturative stressors lead to ethnic ambivalence and identity confusion (as well as coping mechanisms), when the relentlessly secular materialistic character of GCC collides with inviolable cultural traditions, including religious mores? Researching how individuals cope with cultural fracture, and consistent with social capital theory, Davies and Fitchett (2010) conclude that people 'who live in

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consumer cultures and have therefore developed abilities to read, encode, and interpret consumption symbolism are likely also to be better able to cope with the transnational movement' (p. 1016).

What materialistic subcultures – deriving from shared allegiance to a particular constellation of brands and display of associated rituals (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) – are emerging and transcending boundaries hitherto imposed by ethnicity and nationality? What factors encourage anti-materialistic sentiments to arise at the vortex of cultural ideologies? Counter-culture movements, ironically, are often subsumed by GCC in due course (e.g., hip-hop), and when they are not, the frenzied antagonism to consumerism demonstrated by these groups hastens their marginalization. The impact of another six billion people consuming at levels enjoyed by the one billion of the West would clearly be ecologically catastrophic. It is imperative to identify techniques that effectively dampen ecologically harmful manifestations of consumer desire. Lastly, in terms of measuring materialism, existing scales need refinement to ensure reliability and construct validity across cultures, languages and consumption contexts.

With globalization, cultural homogeneity is waning within many nation- states. Technology and tolerance of multiculturalism emboldens ethnic groups to express their distinctiveness. Birds of a feather still flock together, but now roost in a greater number and variety of trees. This chapter argues that the spread of global consumption symbols does not inevitably insinuate homogeneity of consumers' values and habits. Whereas the need to belong *is innate* to human kind (Baumeister and Leary 1995), the accumulating evidence suggests that materialism by and large *is not* (Cleveland *et al.* 2013; Giddens *et al.* 2009). Researchers have only scratched the surface of the connection between materialism and ethnicity, in this period of pervasive marketplace globalization.

Notes

1 BGC perspectives. "Luxe redux: Raising the bar for the selling of luxuries" https://www.bcgperspectives.com/content/articles/consumer_products_automotive_luxe_redux/ (accessed 2 January 2013).
2 E.g., Potlatch ceremony of native tribes living along the Pacific north-western coast of North America.
3 See Peñaloza (1994) for a review.
4 AMC's Mad Men TV show. http://www.imdb.com/character/ch0031457/quotes (accessed 12 February 2013).
5 Mandarin and Spanish have greater and similar numbers of native-speakers, yet the dispersion of English is unparalleled.
6 See Kleine and Baker (2004) for a review.
7 See Hudders and Pandalaere (2011) for a review.

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Appendix 10.1: materialism and consumer behaviour consistency across countries

	Canada	*Mexico*	*Greece*	*Korea*	*Hungary*	*India*	*Chile*	*Sweden*	*Overall*
Traditional meals									
Traditional beverages			–c	+c	+b				
Traditional food items									
Traditional snack items				+c	+a		+b	+a	+a
Traditional restaurants	+a			+c					+a
Tea		–a						–a	–a
Coffee					+c	–c			
Soft drinks		+a	+b		+a		+b	+a	+a

(continued)

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(continued)

	Canada	*Mexico*	*Greece*	*Korea*	*Hungary*	*India*	*Chile*	*Sweden*	*Overall*
Beer	+c	+a				+c			
Wine (table)									
Champagne/expensive wine	+a				+a	+a		+c	+a
Pizza	+b	+c		–c	+b	+a	+a	+a	+a
Hamburgers	+b	+c	+a		+a	+a	+a	+a	+a
Boxed chocolates			+a	+a		+a	+b		+a
Personal portable stereo	+a	+b	+a		+a	+a		+a	+a
VCR	+a		+a		+a				+a
Washing machine						+a			
Clothes dryer			+a	+a	+a	+a		+a	+a
Dishwasher			+a		+b	+a			+a
Hairdryer		+c	+b	+a	+b	+b	+a		+a
Vacuum						+b	+c		
CD player	+a	+a	+a		+a	+a		+c	+a
Bicycle	–b		–b						_a
Videogame console	+a	+a	+b		+a	+b	+b	+a	+a
DVD player	+a	+c	+a	+b	+a			+a	+a
Refrigerator									
Microwave oven	+a		+a	+b	+a		+a	+a	+a
TV set	+a	+a	+a		+a	+c	+a	+a	+a
Digital camera	+a		+a	+a	+a	+b	+b	+a	+a
PC/laptop computer	+a		+c		+a	+a			+a
Food processor	+a		+a	+a	+a	+a	+a		+a
Automobile	+b	+b	+a	+b	+a	+a	+b		+a
Blue jeans	+a				+c	+b	+a	+a	+a
Athletic shoes				_c	+c		+a	+a	+a
Business attire				+a				+b	+a
Traditional fashion		+b		+a				+c	+b
Fur/leather coats	+a		+a	+a	+a	+a	+a		+a
Fragrances	+a		+a	+a	+a	+a	+a	+a	+a
Cosmetics	+a		+a +c		+a	+a	+a	+a	+a
Jewelry	+a		+a	+a	+a	+c	+a		+a
Antique furniture			+b	+a		+a	+c		+a
Purchase DVD's	+c		+b	+b	+b	+a		+c	+a
Watch television	+a		+b	+b	+a		+b	+a	+a
Use mobile phone	+a		+a				+b	+a	+a
Use PC/laptop	+b		+b			+b			+a
Surf internet	+a						+a	+a	+a
Send email	+a							+b	+b
Use ATM	+a	+a			+a	+b		+a	+a

Source: Using data derived from Cleveland *et al.* (2009a).

Note
+/–: Sign direction for significant standardized path coefficients, AMOS multi-group SEM (baseline model for overall; for country-sample results: structural models with measurement-weights constrained, see Cleveland et al., 2009a). a means p<.01, b means p<.05, c means p<.10 (N=2015).