



Hyperfiliation and cultural citizenship: African American consumer acculturation



Tonya Williams Bradford, John F. Sherry Jr. *

University of Notre Dame, Mendoza College of Business, United States

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ABSTRACT

The experiences of African American expatriates in South Africa are explored to explain how acculturation in circumstances of hyperfiliation influences cross-cultural consumption for the purposes of performing cultural citizenship. The acculturation sub-processes of revision, restoration, and retroversion are analyzed to examine the ways in which social capital is mobilized in citizenship projects. These aspects of expatriate experiences are unpacked, theoretical implications are identified, and managerial implications are discussed.

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1. Introduction

Globalization provides alternative experiences of citizenship. Cultural citizenship is one such alternative and is the relationship between identity and aspects of belonging, through consumption (Leach, 1994), resources, employment, or engagement in public discourse (Stevenson, 2003; Turner, 2001). Individuals traversing cultures use possessions to facilitate acculturation and support identity performance (Askegaard, Arnould, & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Belk, 1992; Gilly, 1994; Mehta & Belk, 1991; Peñaloza, 1994; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Firms, as marketers and employers, are aware that keys to success in the host country for mobile individuals include cross-cultural awareness and local relationships (Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). Such mobility often involves consumer acculturation, learning how to acquire market offerings in the host country (Gilly, 1994; Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983), and may influence the experience of cultural citizenship.

Mobile individuals may seek belonging within the host country, by identifying commonalities and interweaving their own past with that of the host country to construct a common heritage (Griffin, 2004). Beyond race and ethnicity, such narratives may be constructed around ideological (e.g., Chinese Christians in the United States) or practice-based (e.g., ashrams) identities. We term this 'hyperfiliation,' the union of the Greek prefix 'hyper' which means to go over or beyond,

and, 'filiate' which means to associate. Hyperfiliation is to associate with groups of a greater status than one's own. Examples of hyperfiliation include Jews relocating to Israel, or Christian Chinese moving to the United States. To be in a circumstance of hyperfiliation requires, at minimum, that incoming individuals perceive that they share with the host country a unifying characteristic from which they may strive to create connections. To study circumstances of hyperfiliation, we explore experiences of African Americans, a stigmatized group in American society, temporarily relocating to South Africa, a society with a black majority and black leadership.

Prior studies examined individuals whose move resulted in membership in the host country culture minority (e.g., Mexicans, Indians, Haitians to America; Americans to Asia). We term this transition 'hypofiliation.' Individuals may experience either circumstance and employ host- and home-country market offerings to maintain a sense of self (Askegaard et al., 2005; Mehta & Belk, 1991; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994). Yet, our study focuses on the tension hyperfiliating émigrés experience between the desire to belong and the acculturation processes they employ to perform cultural citizenship.

Given our brief review of the literature, our research questions are as follows: (1) In what ways does hyperfiliation influence resources employed for cultural citizenship?; (2) How do these resources influence cross-cultural consumption?; and (3) How does understanding hyperfiliation inform theories of acculturation? Through this study, we expand theories of acculturation to encompass three sub-processes we term revision, retroversion and restoration. We explore how individuals in circumstances of hyperfiliation, African Americans in South Africa, may seek cultural citizenship through consumption, an occurrence increasing in prevalence as more individuals traverse the globe each day.

* Corresponding author at: Mendoza College of Business, Notre Dame, Indiana 46556, United States.

E-mail addresses: twbradford@nd.edu (T.W. Bradford), jsherry@nd.edu (J.F. Sherry).

2. Background

2.1. Theoretical foundation

Acculturation is a learning process (Gilly, 1994; Peñaloza, 1994) and comprises three stages: contact as antecedent, conflict, and adaptation as outcome (Berry, 1980). Contact may be physical through relocation, symbolic through the creation of connections, or virtual through communities in cyberspace. Conflict is the recognition of differences between the cultures in contact, and is where knowledge influences navigation across the home and host country environment (Askegaard et al., 2005; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007; Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983). Navigating conflict and resulting acculturation strategies depend upon to whom individuals hold themselves accountable (Askegaard et al., 2005; Tadmor & Tetlock, 2006). Adaptation is the result of acculturation strategies which determine the level of cross-cultural appropriation and integration of the host culture, including attitudes, behaviors and possessions. Though acculturation is comprised of three phases, we focus on the conflict stage where consumer negotiation of home and host culture is prevalent.

Individuals accumulate knowledge and relationships to navigate position in social fields, and develop preferences (Bourdieu, 1984). Cultural capital is knowledge that manifests as taste. Social capital is the aggregation of tangible or prospective resources one has as a result of participating in a network of relationships and which produces an aesthetic sense. Individuals use a range of relationships to accumulate social capital (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Coleman, 1988; Portes, 1998). Therefore, preferences acquired through either social or cultural capital also are likely to influence how individuals learn to consume cross-culturally.

The narrative of the Diaspora proclaims the continent of Africa to be African Americans' 'motherland' (Davis, 1997). The histories of blacks in America and in South Africa have significant parallels. Each involves the subordination of African people by whites, and a struggle by blacks to redefine identity, and citizenship. This identification, derived from a shared experience of ethnicity, influences consumer behavior (Hirschman, 1981; Stayman & Deshpande, 1989; Xu, Shim, Lotz, & Almeida, 2004). Such identification likely reflects cross cultural relationships, which drives consumption of home or host country market offerings (Peñaloza, 1994), guides the use of possessions to represent the cultural self to others (Mehta & Belk, 1991; Oswald, 1999), and impacts preferences (Gilly, 1994). The result is a narrative

that connects the past, present, and potential futures (Thompson, 1997; Thompson, Pollio, & Locander, 1994). Narratives often are vehicles for myths (Belk, Wallendorf, & Sherry, 1989; Stern, 1995), structured reports shared within a social group that provide a model to address contradictions in the lived experience (Levy, 1981), and perform hybridized citizenship (Joseph, 1999). For example, consumer narratives about food convey what is gender- or class-appropriate (Levy, 1981), whereas marketer narratives convey what is necessary for celebration (Stern, 1995), or to be in good health (Thompson, 2004). Marketers harness the power of 'commercial myths,' resonant stories that address contradictions, to position offerings as solutions for consumer problems (Thompson & Tian, 2008), and to structure interactions with consumers (Cayla & Arnould, 2008; Thompson, 2004). Though race has been a limitation for many African Americans in their experience of citizenship, American culture views consumption as an alternative (Leach, 1994), providing an opportunity for citizenship.

2.2. Methods

Our research context, African Americans temporarily relocating to South Africa, allows us to examine a circumstance of hyperfiliation:

I don't care however tenuous our connection was, it could be 8, 9, 10, 12 generations ago, to see that [African Americans] come from someplace that is beautiful, that is vast, that is magnificent, it is glorious...to experience and interact with [black South Africans].
~Larry

Some African Americans yearn for an experience of Africa as a means of awakening a connectedness summoned as a result of being on the African continent (Davis, 1997). While perceived ancestral connections may not be inherent in other ideological identity situations, different types of connections may resonate for other individuals in cross-cultural settings.

To explore this acculturation phenomenon, both expatriate and repatriated individuals were included (see Table 1), an advance relative to sampling frames used in other research. Our informants were solicited through black and white South Africans, a purposive approach to obtain informants who were more likely to engage with individuals beyond expatriate enclaves. Through snowball sampling, 23 informants participated. Our informants primarily relocated as expatriates, though entrepreneurs are well represented. They hold college degrees, as well

Table 1
Demographic profile of participants.

Pseudonym	Locale	Type of relocation	Years in RSA	Gender	Age	Marital status	Occupation in South Africa
Alice	RSA	Expatriation	8	Female	50s	Single	Store owner
Beth	RSA	Expatriation	7	Female	30s	Single	Restaurant owner
Carol	RSA	Expatriation	1	Female	50s	Single	Retired
Della	RSA	Expatriation	9	Female	40s	Single	US government agency
Ellen	RSA	Expatriation	3	Female	40s	Single	Global communications
Francis	RSA	Migration	9	Female	30s	Married	Manager-local firm
Georgia	RSA	Expatriation	3	Female	50s	Married	Fortune 100 executive
Helen	RSA	Migration	4	Female	30s	Married	Stay at home mother
Irene	RSA	Expatriation	5	Female	50s	Married	Faculty
Al	RSA	Expatriation	10	Male	40s	Single	Business owner
Brad	RSA	Migration	11	Male	40s	Single	Faculty
Carl	RSA	Expatriation	10	Male	40s	Single	Consultant
David	RSA	Expatriation	5	Male	40s	Single	Real estate
Ed	RSA	Expatriation	3	Male	30s	Single	Investment banker
Frank	RSA	Expatriation	5	Male	30s	Single	Management consultant
Greg	RSA	Migration	7	Male	60s	Married	Entrepreneur
Hank	RSA	Migration	9	Male	30s	Married	Social venture
Jack	RSA	Expatriation	4	Male	40s	Married	International lawyer
Ken	RSA	Expatriation	6	Male	50s	Married	Entrepreneur
Joy	USA	Expatriation	3	Female	40s	Single	Fortune 100 executive
Lora	USA	Expatriation	3	Female	40s	Single	Consultant
Larry	USA	Expatriation	5	Male	40s	Single	Management consultant
Paul	USA	Expatriation	5	Male	60s	Married	Freelance consultant

as advanced degrees, professional certifications, and successes prior to relocating. They lived in multiple locations domestically, and in some cases abroad, prior to relocating to South Africa. These individuals reside in established affluent suburbs amongst black and white South Africans in the greater Johannesburg area. It is important to acknowledge that social class allows these individuals to have a choice to become expatriates (Holt, 1998). Yet, choosing South Africa is influenced by their desire for an experience of belonging.

Data were obtained through directive (e.g., “Describe your experiences of South Africa”) and non-directive phenomenological interviews, participant-observation field notes, and member-checking. The South African-based informants were interviewed in situ, and repatriated informants were interviewed by phone. Each informant was interviewed at least once for an average of ninety minutes, ranging from thirty minutes to four hours. Interviews were conducted in offices, homes, restaurants, and cafes. Participant observation resulted in field notes that reflect a variety of experiences, from following driving directions, to participating in social gatherings. Data collection continued until data became repetitive.

The first author lived as an expatriate in South Africa. Her experience provided the grounding of this study. She conducted all of the interviews with study participants throughout 2004. Having a shared expatriate experience and common ethnic identity facilitated access to informants as well as accelerated rapport during the interviews. The second author provided the guidance and analytical distance in data collection, coding and interpretation that provoked a negotiated understanding of the results.

Transcripts of in-depth interviews and field notes provide the basis for our interpretation. Diachronic and synchronic analyses were performed for each individual (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Thompson, 1997). The iterative process of analysis included tacking between the data and the literature (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to develop further an explanation of acculturation processes and cultural citizenship in circumstances of hyperfiliation. Themes relating to acculturation practices that support identity and cultural citizenship emerged from the data. Our findings are presented through the themes emerging from the codes.

3. Findings

Our findings focus on the second stage of the acculturation process: conflict. Conflict manifests in encounters of inconsistencies between the home and host environment. We find our informants manage conflict in two primary ways. First, our informants engage in narrative entrepreneurship to revise their recollection of the past, and thus, enter a circumstance of hyperfiliation. They unite black American and South African experiences of the struggle for freedom and equality into a common narrative to navigate their present experiences. This interaction leads to an alternate conceptualization of the self and experiences of belonging. Second, we find these individuals gain knowledge and interpersonal relationships to integrate behaviors, attitudes, values and beliefs which facilitate cultural citizenship in multiple home and host communities. Three acculturation sub-processes emerge from our informant experiences of managing conflict which we term revision, retroversion, and restoration.

3.1. Revision

Revision is the process of making corrections, and allows individuals to manage experiences of exclusion within the dominant culture. African Americans may feel challenged to attenuate those instances where they believe they are negatively responded to by the hegemonic white American culture due to skin color (West, 1994):

[W]hen I went to Africa, I wanted to see if what I'd been told when I was growing up—I basically was told [by American society] that I

wasn't worth a hoot—was really the whole story or if maybe there was something else I could learn. If there was something else I needed to understand about myself as a human being in this world that I wasn't getting from my experience in [the States]. I think I found that [in South Africa]. ~Larry

As part of the Diaspora, African Americans are aware of their tie to the continent of Africa. Our informants acknowledge they are not from South Africa, yet they desire to attain an experience they do not perceive available in America. They seek to revise their personal experience of themselves by emphasizing in Africa the feature they downplay in America: skin color.

How one chooses to self-categorize is a crucial aspect of identity. In the United States, people of African heritage have been classified using various terms, including Negro, Colored, Black, and most recently, African American. One classification not employed routinely is the label ‘American’:

[To be characterized as an American,...]I've got the image of a condom...it feels kind of synthetic and unreal and not meaningful...In the U.S., there's a feeling of being a minority. [In South Africa,] I feel like I'm a part of the majority...a part of the power structure...Now I know what white people feel like in America. ~Ed

This informant uses a visceral trope to describe the experience of categorization as inauthentic. For African Americans, such categorization is laden with meaning for those who recall being classified as American without the associated privileges. Indeed, the social construction of race construes position in American society such that even symbolic membership in the society is negotiated through an impermeable physical barrier. In America, color is an indelible badge of race and inferred status, yet, in Africa the context of color is muted, hence our informants have the opportunity to experience alternatives.

Beyond categorization as a means to experience the self anew, our informants incorporate aspects of South African local market offerings as symbols of belonging. Joy delights in the South African ways of life and incorporates local market offerings as well as cultural symbols into her identity. Joy's entertaining and culinary skills are central to an identity she shares with her sisters:

[South Africans] do a braai, and it has [an] entirely different set of sauces...I loved the braais; they do fantastic things with braais...I brought a lot of spices [to the States from South Africa]...I brought spices for my sisters and they're asking for more...and the rooibos tea—it's been plagiarized by Lipton or somebody [in America] ~Joy

The braai, experienced and discussed by almost every informant, is typically a gathering of family and friends to share a meal prepared on a grill. A common menu for a braai includes a combination of meats (e.g., sausage) and side dishes (e.g., mealie pap) prepared with favorite spices (e.g., peri-peri). Some of the offerings and rituals, such as the braai, our informants adopt have their genesis in white South Africa—the heritage of the colonizing English or the oppressive Afrikaners. South Africans of all races and classes view the braai as a cultural symbol of South African-ness. Marketers employ commercial myths to sustain the ritual of the braai, and to communicate appropriate market offerings, inclusive of catering for what was once a sacred, family-managed gathering. By adapting the culturally symbolic braai in lieu of an American barbeque, our informants embrace South African-ness.

Another South African ritual is that of afternoon tea featuring ‘red bush’, a tea from plants native to the region and used for centuries by black South Africans. Various brands of ‘rooibos’ tea, the Afrikaner translation of ‘red bush’ tea, now may be found in supermarkets and gourmet coffee shops within South Africa and beyond. The embrace of this beloved tea by our informants allows them to demonstrate

cultural knowledge and membership through the use of relevant market offerings. The associated myths convey the origins, authenticity, and meanings associated with the offerings. The belief and transmission of the commercial myths related to rooibos are so ingrained that the marketing of the tea by a non-South African firm is villainized by our informants. As cultural citizens, these individuals seek to protect and maintain cultural symbols. The negotiation of belonging is not simply a matter of acceptance into black South African culture, rather it is negotiated through the embrace of South African cultural symbols such as braais and rooibos tea.

South Africans most often wear Westernized clothing, yet many informants share experiences of wearing traditional African attire. Georgia attends a number of formal events, and made a decision to modify her wardrobe to reflect traditional African styles:

Most of the events [my husband and I] attend with black Africans are mostly traditional [African] dress. When we attend with the [white] Afrikaners, it is usually formal—black tie formal...I have not had this many long dresses since my prom. I also have some interesting traditional African outfits. The African women I know have taken me to some traditional stores [in] Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban—I finally found [traditional African attire]. ~Georgia

Through Georgia's formal garb, she communicates her awareness of appropriateness to the black South African community, and provides a public sign of identity (Belk, 1988). Through her relationships with locals, she gains expert guides, travel companions, proper attire, and interpretations of commercial myths to orchestrate her consumption choices and sate her desires for identity representation and cultural citizenship.

Our informants make a range of revisions to manage the experience of conflict negotiated through acculturation in hyperfiliation. They engage both products and interpersonal relationships to navigate their social world. Cultural knowledge gained through interpersonal relationships influences consumer behaviors, which may be publicly observed or privately practiced, and allows individuals to interpret commercial myths. A result of this navigation may be the experience of belonging, which may occur at multiple levels—from the temporary change of clothing to transformative changes reflected in daily activities such as diet, or fundamental beliefs and values.

3.2. Retroversion

Retroversion is the inversion of status hierarchies across various aspects of our informants' lives. For African Americans in South Africa, retroversion is observed in the self selection of an alternative status despite skin color, age or gender, an opportunity they perceive to be rarely if ever available in America:

I'm working with the [United States] Federal Reserve...you have to be a 65-year-old white guy in the United States to get to do something like that. I mean just to meet Alan Greenspan, let alone go and talk about redrafting regulation. ~Beth

Beth expresses elation regarding her access to and participation in the South African power structure to influence American society through the creation of national financial governance. While she perceives the absence of limitations due to her age, race or gender in her South African role, she simultaneously embraces social class and privilege. Our informants do not begrudge the benefits of hegemony, only the fact that access is limited for them in the U.S.

Brad grew up in a large, urban American city without access to personal green spaces. He describes his experience of retroversion through his garden:

I'm sitting out here, in my garden and I feel like—definitely not DMX [an African American rap artist], because we would be in

the Projects in Yonkers or something like that! Like Hugh Hefner or something sitting outside by my waterfall in my garden listening to the birds singing...I've designed everything to enhance the natural. So all the plants, flowers, trees are indigenous. That attracts, supports the bird and life natural to this area...[T]he investment is into the garden to support the natural ecosystem and to me that's kind of spiritual. ~Brad

Brad's garden acts as a metaphor for his desire to belong in South Africa. When describing his environment, Brad draws upon American commercial myths to define his South African experience. In this sense, Brad inverts American values of a materialistic culture to embrace South African values of a family-oriented culture evident in his focus on his home. Contrasting his Garden of Eden reality with the Projects of Yonkers, the stereotypical lifestyle of black America, Brad inverts the American experience of color and class in his adaptation of the markers of white American privilege. In doing so, Brad elevates these markers, propagated through commercial myths, to a transcendental experience.

In South Africa, our informants live amongst the elite, but their heritage draws them to interact with and contribute to those black communities with fewer resources and instills in them a desire to be good stewards of the resources they have by minimizing waste:

I am not as wasteful as I was before going [to South Africa], and I think that is from being out in the townships and experiencing how little people had...I don't think I'm as materialistic as I was before going over there. I get my little Misook and a couple of St. John's that I can interchange [versus buying the entire collection]... ~Joy

One struggle for many of our informants is the matter of waste resulting from privilege. Joy is accustomed to having a personal shopper create seasonal wardrobes from her favorite designers—a pattern she continues in a moderated fashion to realize her desire to reduce waste. African Americans in South Africa develop sensitivity to their access to abundance and resultant waste for which they are personally responsible.

Our informants maintain contact with family and friends in America through visits, social and mass media, and telephone calls. In doing so, they often find themselves assessing behaviors through a lens of black South African values. These individuals critically assess their stewardship of time, intellect, contacts, and money:

The last time we went [to the States]...we went for the NBA All-Star game...All these rides [cars] are rented...You see Escalades, Lincoln Navigators...[My friend] says it all the time: 'African Americans are really in trouble.' I think being [in South Africa], you can see it clearly. That's what I always say..."[African Americans are] in the Matrix'... ~Hank

Hank views this materialism as a parallel to the social ills that exist in the African American community in America. Hank draws upon American culture, and uses the movie entitled *The Matrix* to describe his view of the African American community in America. The film depicts a future in which the world is a reality simulated to pacify the human population while their energy is used to support other life forms. He attributes his safely remaining outside of the façade to his time in South Africa. Curiously, Hank does not perceive any irony in scheduling a visit to see friends and family to coincide with his attendance at the NBA All-Star game.

Consumers are increasingly engaged in the production of what they consume (Arnould & Thompson, 2005), seeking to address what they perceive as marketplace voids. In addition, these producers anticipate that their offerings also may address cultural omissions. Alice, an expert in a white, male-dominated field, is one such entrepreneur who

was disturbed by the lack of African representation in the global market:

I've opened [in South Africa] for the specific purpose of providing a retail outlet for the beneficiating of metals and mineral products of South Africa...I'm here to do good to help develop the country while I am making money... It's wonderful to be a part of this process, to feel that you could make a very tangible contribution to development that's happening at so base a level and at the end of the day has so much benefit to so many black people. ~Alice

Alice's engagement of black Africans in the artisan side of the jewelry industry in South Africa inverts historical industry hierarchies. Her plan to streamline the gold-mine-to-retail-jewelry process includes assuming control of and creating curative positions for her and the black South African artisans she engages. For these informants, job creation is a means of performing cultural citizenship in support of the South African Black Economic Empowerment government initiative.

The experience of embracing, rejecting, seeking and experimenting with brands is one of the conflicts African Americans negotiate in South Africa. Francis describes the foods in South Africa as "local, fresh, high-quality, and natural." Though a variety of American brands are available at her South African grocer, she prefers South African brands:

I probably go for the Ceres [juice]...Minute Maid [juice] was my brand back [in America]...If I see Minute Maid, I wouldn't take it, but when I first moved [to South Africa] I would have. ~Francis

Our informants engage brands as signifiers of cultural citizenship. Their choices reflect the influence of commercial myths and the acquired belief that South African offerings are superior to American products with respect to quality or novelty. Francis exhibits retroversion in her choice of brands, swapping her desired home brand for the host country favorite. While the brand choice for juice is mundane, its presence in the home is a daily reminder of one's locale and cultural citizenship.

Retroversion is evident in a range of behaviors including career, lifestyle, and brand choices. Our informants employ the marketplace to facilitate experiences of retroversion with a focus on prestige, exclusivity and pleasure. Both public and private consumption is influenced, as is the performance of citizenship. The continual construction of cultural citizenship hybridities is required to legitimate our informants' as both American and African cultural citizens.

3.3. Restoration

Restoration is a process of mending experiences of damage (e.g., self-esteem, ancestral ties, and social norms). The process of restoration often begins when our informants acknowledge an ancestral relationship with the host country. This tie is not so much about genetics as it is a shared experience of oppression. These informants construct parallels and linkages to Africans, emphasizing commonalities and attenuating differences:

I would be in [a township] and I was with [my friend]...it was a crowd of people in an open field, and I said, 'What are they doing?' and she said 'Oh, they are just killing a goat.' It was a little bit of déjà vu...There's some connection there. I think I felt that a lot, the connectedness...[In America] my grandfather used to slaughter goats for major occasions...when we had family gatherings. ~Joy

Joy associates her observance of a slaughter in Africa to memories of slaughters by her grandfather in America as a means of restoring her African ancestry. These informants seek to unearth their personal

experiences of African-ness and thus belonging. National experiences of belonging parallel those found with consumers in commercial spaces (Rosenbaum & Montoya, 2007). Performances of hybridized cultural citizenship across national boundaries also facilitates the embrace and enactment of cultural practices inclusive of consumption (Joseph, 1999).

While our informants continue to be ardent consumers, they perceive consumption differently. In America, these informants acknowledge consumption as leisure versus in South Africa consumption tends to be in support of leisure:

There is a heavy emphasis on family [in South Africa]...They emphasize spending family time...[Black South Africans] gather up on the weekends and have cookouts...invite friends and family...I've learned how to sit on the patio...listen to jazz...My husband and I had gotten caught up in the biggest rat race [in the States]...I didn't leave the office until eight or eight-thirty at night—e-mailed all weekend. Brought paperwork home every night and weekend. Saturday morning, he's headed for the Target. I'm headed for the dry cleaner, go to Costco, got to go here and there...We started the same thing on Sunday morning. ~Georgia

In South Africa, Georgia has come to privilege the centrality of family, and engages market offerings as support to enriching leisure time with her family. Available leisure time tends to be associated with roles of privilege and social status (Veblen, 1899 [1931]), a position sought through experiences of restoration. It influences experiences of social position as well as emotional well-being.

In addition to personal balance, these individuals seek opportunities to engage with black South Africans of all classes as a means of participating more fully in the black South African experience. One instance is the development of a church modeled after African American churches with a focus on inclusion of black South Africans. Central to the African American church experience are homemade sweets served immediately following Sunday morning service. Though Carol attends another church regularly, she describes her participation in this church's fellowship ritual:

I went into an Indian neighborhood [in Johannesburg] and found the Pillsbury [cake mix]... I'm not a baker. The people I know who bake bring all their stuff from the States because they insist they don't like the [South African] flour...I don't bake and I don't care. ~Carol

Carol is aware that there is value attached to a 'homemade' cake, even one made from an American-brand box cake mix. She appreciates the intrinsic value of the brand reinforced through American commercial myths to facilitate her contribution to the church's sweets table. She values the knowledge of where to acquire an American brand of cake mix, yet instead of sharing her market knowledge, she periodically contributes a 'homemade' cake.

The performance of black South African rituals within African American families also supports the experience of kinship and belonging. Lora describes the experience of welcoming her child while living in South Africa:

[Before my baby was born,] I had a baby shower... Once the baby was born, I had a celebration at my home. I had a combination naming ceremony and christening. The [black South African] tradition is to slaughter a lamb...We didn't slaughter ours. I bought it whole. We did grill it in the back yard. We had traditional beer served in gourds. There was a woman there who gave my daughter her African name...my daughter ate [mealie pap] as a baby... The woman who helped me...We called her Aunt [Ethel]... I would tell her to please only talk to [my child] in Zulu so she could try to pick up something. ~Lora

American rituals provide a script for how a woman becomes a mother not only through gestation and childbirth, but also with a baby shower and gift registry. The baby shower ritual prescribes who is to be invited, what food is appropriate, as well as what items are to be gifted. Black South African rituals provide a script for officially bringing a new baby into the family through a naming ceremony. The naming ceremony ritual requires traditional food, beverages, and vessels. Lora crafts a ritual for her newborn integrating traditions from both cultures as a means of enacting cultural citizenship for herself and her child. Lora relies upon a black South African caregiver to teach her how to best care for her newborn. Beyond the caretaking of her daughter, Lora seeks to give her daughter something that was taken from Africans as they crossed the Atlantic in slave ships, the gift of an African language.

Restoration involves individuals navigating social fields to recreate facets of life that matter to them. We find that African Americans in South Africa strive toward self-development through relationship ties with one another and with South Africans. Through social capital, they acquire familiarity with social norms and behaviors, as well as knowledge of values and beliefs held dear within kinship and friendship circles.

4. Discussion and managerial implications

Ong (1999, 55) treats modernity as an “evolving process of imagination and practice in particular historically situated formations that deploy perplexing ideological formations of culture and race.” We have extended her concept of ‘flexible citizenship’—the “strategies and effects” of nomads seeking to “both circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes (Ong, 1999, 55,112,124)” —beyond the transnational deployment of human and economic capital and into the realm of social capital by probing the identity context of consumers’ imaginations.

Previous studies of transnational migration consider acculturation in circumstances of hypofiliation. Yet people experience a broader construction of transnationalism including virtual (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn) and physical (e.g., World Market, Little Italy, Greek town) space, as well as varied duration and levels of immersion (e.g. blogs, vacations, immigration). In our study of acculturation in hyperfiliation, we find individuals actively engage the market to construct a new experience. This integration results in cross-cultural consumption and hybridized citizenship performed and continually revised within the global marketplace. Such transnational opportunities have implications for firms with respect to positioning across markets. Our study has contributed to the consumer acculturation literature an explanation of how circumstances of hyperfiliation influence the performance of cultural citizenship through accumulated social capital and consumption.

Models of acculturation in hypofiliation are predicated upon the notion that individuals are constrained in navigating social position in the host country by accumulated cultural capital. We find that individuals also may employ social capital to navigate social position in the host country as a means of facilitating acculturation as they access market offerings and embrace values and beliefs, to develop and maintain relationships in the home and host environments. Our findings demonstrate how social capital may be accumulated and invested through interactions with others, while also providing opportunities for word-of-mouth transmissions of consumption practices to support belonging. Through word-of-mouth, consumers share information about market offerings and accentuate relevant aspects of commercial myths. Previous research finds that firms employ commercial myths to generate consumer demand (Thompson & Tian, 2008). Though marketers do not control such word-of-mouth transmissions (Brown & Reingen, 1987; Kozinets, 1999), it is critical that firms monitor the relationship between the commercial myths they propagate and the resultant consumer behaviors and attitudes. As commercial myths are

reliant upon the culture in which they reside to convey meaning (Thompson & Tian, 2008), it is necessary to understand the sources of cultural meaning and possibilities for change so myths remain relevant.

An examination of commercial myths should consider how and under what conditions they may be successfully employed cross-culturally. It is necessary for firms to actively manage when and how to use commercial myths to fortify brand meaning. When associating a brand with a specific culture, it is necessary to explore and incorporate cultural symbols to achieve resonance with the target consumer. For example, a Chevrolet jingle targeting American consumers features American cultural icons (e.g., baseball, hot dogs, and apple pie), whereas the South African version features South African cultural icons (e.g., Braai, rugby, sunny skies). It is important to note that commercial myths may invoke either a specific national culture (i.e., American or South African) or a brand-based culture (i.e., Disney). Firms must develop and carefully manage strategies to minimize confusion. Finally, an examination of the extent to which commercial myth boundary crossings are acceptable would prove relevant.

The experiences of youth have been studied to understand the role of brands in a global experience of society (Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Strizhakova, Coulter, & Price, 2011). We have studied the experiences of just one minority group among multitudes of other niche segments of individuals in transition that may be relevant to multinational brands. Though youth are an interesting case of individuals in transition, our research provides an alternative to examine self-directed transitions. We believe our research provides additional opportunities to explore consumer global engagement and local cultural citizenship through a range of transition experiences. Firms may find value in understanding how individuals across transitions use brands to navigate between imagined and actual communities in the performance of cultural citizenship.

5. Future research implications and conclusions

As in prior studies, we are able to induct a basic model for consumer acculturation with specific agents as antecedents and specific outcomes driving consumer behavior. Our work is distinct from prior studies of individuals in pursuit of global citizenry through cultural capital accumulated through authentic experiences or brands (Strizhakova et al., 2011; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Some scholars find individuals may seek to be both global and local citizens (Cannon & Yaprak, 2002; Kjeldgaard & Askegaard, 2006; Steenkamp & de Jong, 2010), embracing brands as one means for conveying belonging (Kressmann et al., 2006). Our research indicates that individuals may seek to focus on belonging locally in spite of the growing emphasis on globalization.

In the case of African Americans living in South Africa, a circumstance of hyperfiliation, consumers manage conflict in acculturation through the sub-processes of revision, retroversion, and restoration. Revision is the process of recognizing the existence of alternate perspectives of self. These may be observed in a variety of consumer behaviors including affiliations and brand preferences. Retroversion is inverting the experience of any number of status hierarchies. This is observed in the adaptation of a preferred status for the self which manifests in attitudes toward home and host brands. Restoration is a process of replacing, mending or creating what has been expunged in various facets of one's life. This is evident in the use of consumption to craft and execute rituals and practices as internal statements of healing and external signs of belonging. Each of these processes harnesses social capital to support self-development, and ultimately guides consumer behavior. As individuals select cross-cultural experiences to advance their identity projects, they may choose to hyperfiliate, affording them opportunities for revision, retroversion, and restoration in acculturation. Additional study is warranted to ascertain the moderators and boundary conditions required for these sub-processes to occur.

We focus on a particular segment of American society and its experiences cross-culturally. Peñaloza (2001) calls for further examination of cultures represented by greater numbers in order to understand more precisely their interaction with cultures represented by fewer members. The African American population in the U.S. is a numerical minority yet exerts socially influential membership, as evident in its origination of trends appropriated by the numerically larger population. One such example is the wearing of beltless, oversized, baggy pants by white youths and adults. This style mimics prison attire introduced in African American ghettos by ex-convicts, adopted into the mainstream by white suburban teens, and packaged by marketers for sale in mainstream retail outlets. These findings warrant further study to examine the influence of non-dominant culture in the creation, transmission and viability of commercial myths in the consumption of offerings in support of performing cultural citizenship.

Transnational studies of cross-cultural consumption must consider mechanisms consumers invoke to access and deploy various resources in navigating their lived experience. Individuals, institutions and nations co-create cross-cultural market and citizenship experiences, and convey them through narratives. In this study, we provide insights into how cultural constructions of narratives influence the consumption of offerings to support cultural citizenship.

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