



4

Globalization and Global Consumer Culture: The Fragmentation, Fortification, Substitution and Transmutation of Social Identities

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The forces of globalization, above all those connected to the movement of people across borders and the internationalization of markets and media, are loosening and reconfiguring cultural identities, and in some cases, stimulating resistance to globalization and promoting the reinforcement of traditional bonds. Cultural identity was once a straightforward concept, in that the indigenous (local) society was the primary impetus for the development of such an identity. Cultural identity formation nowadays is a more complex phenomenon, given that an increasing number of people identify with more than one cultural group, and they have to figure out how to navigate between these multiple cultures. Since these multiple cultures “can be incorporated into a person’s identity in many different ways depending on individual choices and the status or power of the different cultures in question,

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cultural identities take on highly diverse forms in a global world” (Jensen et al., 2011, p. 286).

Globalization is a popular theme in the disciplines of sociology, anthropology and political economy, and a burgeoning literature on the subject can be found in the international business and marketing literature. However, globalization has attracted little research attention in psychology (Chiu & Kwan, 2016). This is a curious omission since the psychological reactions to globalization, including the development of identities that transcend ethnic and national boundaries, challenges researchers’ assumptions “about the nature of community, personal attachment, and belonging” (Woodward et al., 2008, p. 207) at a time when the connections between cultures and countries have dramatically intensified (Arnett, 2002). Understanding the social impact of globalization and individuals’ acceptance or resistance toward global identities have important ramifications for theory and practice, and perhaps even for public policy.

This chapter focuses on how globalization and global consumer culture (hereafter, GCC) contribute to the formation and maintenance of cultural identity. GCC comprises a set of values and characteristics that may conflict with parochial values and characteristics, and it potentially represents a supplementary or substitute basis for cultural identity. Grasping the effects of globalization on identity requires the adoption of an interdisciplinary perspective, integrating theories from social psychology and cultural anthropology with insights acquired from marketing and consumer behavior. Following a synopsis of the globalization literature, I review social psychology theories that are relevant for discerning how self-concept and cultural identity are shaped by globalization. After elaborating on the character and evolution of GCC, I focus on the dissemination and acquisition of GCC. Next, I delve into contexts and conditions that encourage or impede the maintenance, integration and alternation of specific cultural identities. I will touch on the roles played by formal institutions (e.g., WTO), informal movements (e.g., populism, environmentalism), geopolitical events (e.g., Brexit), meta-trends (e.g., immigration, technology, social media) and

crises (e.g., COVID-19), in terms of how these independently and interactively foster pro-global and anti-global sentiments. The chapter closes with an appraisal of how these sentiments influence cultural identities, and their ramifications for global consumer culture.

Globalization: Definition and a Brief History

Globalization is a term that was first used in the 1930s, but which did not gain currency for decades (James & Steger, 2014). Since the mid-1990s, however, it has attracted a huge amount of attention in the popular press, and scholars have likewise published volumes of largely conceptual papers discussing globalization's effects on society (Cleveland, 2018).

Numerous definitions for globalization have been advanced. As stated by Harvey (1999), globalization represents the compression of time and space. Gilpin (1987) described globalization as a swelling "...interdependence of national economies in trade, finance, and macroeconomic policy" (p. 389). Waters (1995) alternatively defined globalization as "a social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding" (p. 3). Albrow's (1997) definition explicitly notes the effect globalization has on individuals, describing globalization as the "...diffusion of practices, values, and technology that have an influence on people's lives worldwide" (p. 88). Both Giddens (1990) and Robertson (1991) describe globalization as being driven by multiple factors. Giddens speaks about the discontinuous globalization processes driven by capitalism, the inter-state system, militarism and industrialism; whereas Robertson stresses the dynamic interdependent factors of politics (Western imperialism), economics (capitalism), and culture (i.e., the global media system).

Taking these conceptualizations together, globalization is a pervasive, ongoing series of multi-layered processes or forces, each progressing at varying speeds in different parts of the world and differentially affecting sectors of the population (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). Globalization is neither new nor complete; neither is it a coordinated movement nor

an accomplished fact, but rather it is best considered as representing a succession of waves. In reality, the concept of global human society predates the existence of most contemporary ethnonational societies, going back to the Roman Empire (Robertson, 1990). Periods of extensive economic integration have occurred for at least 2000 years, first under the Roman Empire and later, with trade networks like the Silk Road, which operated between medieval European kingdoms, and civilizations in Arabia, Africa, Central Asia and the Far East. Prior to the modern period, the world economy achieved peak integration before the 1900s, principally through the British Empire and other colonial domains. During the period corresponding to the two world wars and their aftermaths, global integration went into retreat and national identities were resurgent. It was not until the late 1960s, as the result of technological advancements in transportation and media, followed by trade liberalization efforts, that globalization began to increase once again.

Many people are unaware that the nation-state is relatively new construction, which, by bringing together disparate regions and cities under a centralized authority, started in Europe in the eighteenth century before spreading worldwide, particularly during the era of decolonization following the Second World War. These developments, in turn, gave birth to national cultures and identities that were fashioned from some mixture of truth and myth about the past of a given area and its peoples (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019a), and further propagated by educational, religious, political and other formal institutions of the state—often by force or other means of coercion (Renan, 1882/2002)—in conjunction with its creative industries and broadcast media.

Forces that transcend nation-states are driving contemporary culture change. According to Appadurai (1990) global cultural flows are driven by five intertwined forces, which he labeled as (1) ethnoscapes (transfers of people), (2) mediascapes (the means for the worldwide dissemination of information), (3) technoscapes (the diffusion of technological processes and know-how, and the movements across supply chains) and finanscapes (denoting the financial plumbing of globalization, including the capital and ownership instruments).

Territorialization represents “the organization of human activities by fixing them to a spatial territory”¹ (a task usually led by the nation-state). Deterritorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994) signifies the obverse. Up until the last quarter of the twentieth century stiff national borders obstructed the flow of information exchanges across cultures, and the lives of the vast majority of people predominantly followed local values, customs and behavioral expectations. With globalization, culture is increasingly deterritorialized (Hannerz, 1992); that is, decoupled from the constraints hitherto imposed by geography. Deterritorialization concerns each of Appadurai’s driving forces. With respect to *ethnoscapes*, for example, laboring populations (immigrants and migrant workers) are increasingly being brought into the spaces of wealthy societies; executives travel and conduct business on five continents; global diasporas of Chinese, Indians, Jews and others can be found in many of the large cities of the world. The Internet, harnessed by multinational corporations, permits information and technology (i.e., *technoscapes*) of similar content and quality, to be increasingly available in all save for the remotest corners of the globe. Regarding *mediascapes*, there are new markets for film companies, television programmers, art impresarios and travel agencies, that have cropped up to accompany the flows of people and technology across borders. As these commodities are transferred, consumer tastes are transformed. In terms of *finanscapes*, investors are pursuing the best returns, increasingly regardless of national frontiers. In addition to the culture-shaping power of modern media, ideas (re: *ideoscapes*) are shared by the growing ethnic diasporas in many Western cities, as well as by voluntary associations of intellectuals (such as academics) working together across frontiers.

As I will detail in this chapter, globalization has a profound influence on people’s values, their self-concept, including their cultural identity or identities, and by extension, their level of attachment to local, national, global and perhaps foreign communities (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019b; Grimalda et al., 2018; Hall & Du Gay, 1996).

¹ <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199599868.001.0001/acref-9780199599868-e-1864> (Accessed July 2021).

Globalization, Culture and Cultural Identity

For the purposes of this chapter, *culture* represents a system of values, norms and customs that are shared among a group of individuals and that, when taken together, comprise a design for living (Cavusgil et al., 2016). Interlaced with nearly every human activity, culture is regarded as the dominant regulator of personal thoughts, activities and ways of life (Berry, 1997). Incoming information percolates through the lens of culture, subconsciously affecting individuals' perceptual frameworks. Reference groups are those groups that serve as standards for self-appraisals, and as a foundation to guide appropriate attitudes and norms for conduct (Batra et al., 2000). Through the activation of reference group social norms, culture also has a semi-conscious regulating effect on personal priorities and behavioral expectations (Cleveland, 2015). The next paragraphs delve into several interrelated social psychology theories that are relevant for comprehending how globalization affects self-concept and cultural identity: (a) social identity theory, (b) cognitive dissonance theory, (c) congruity theory and balance theory, (d) optimal distinctiveness theory, (e) self-verification theory, and, most important, (f) acculturation theory.

The need to belong is an innate and culturally universal human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maslow, 1943). Expressing one's communal membership and embracing the values and activities that go together with this community is a way to fulfill this need. Social identity is a sense of "we-ness": the part of a person's self-concept that derives from their involvement in social groups, including their investment in those socially constructed categories known as cultures. Culture provides people with a way of being, and when absorbed into their self-concept, culture serves to guide their thoughts and actions (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). According to *social identity theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people are motivated to preserve a positive self-concept. Such feelings of social belonging motivate people to develop attitudes and engage in behaviors that favor their ingroup(s), possibly at the expense of relevant outgroups. The general root cause of such ingroup favoritism relates to the psychological need for positive distinctiveness, meaning that people are motivated to differentiate their ingroup in a positive

manner from outgroups, thereby engaging in social comparisons. The individual may come to see their ingroup as superior, which can lead to prejudice, and if the person has the ability to exert influence on the outgroup, this can lead to discrimination. In some cases, a pathway for establishing positive self-concept is for people to identify with a group perceived to have a higher status (e.g., the global “jet set”), and to dissociate or distance themselves from low status groups (e.g., the parochial community).

What happens when a person belongs to two social groups that are at odds, or when the person encounters information that paints the undesirable outgroup (enviable ingroup) in a favorable (unfavorable) light? *Cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1962) is the mental discomfort experienced by a person having two or more contradictory beliefs, values or ideas at the same time. When experiencing dissonance, a person is motivated to reduce this psychological tension by either changing their perceptions or attitudes (e.g., about the cultural outgroup), or ignoring information (e.g., adverse material about one’s national history) that conflicts with existing beliefs. *Congruity theory* (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955) likewise posits that individuals seek consistency in their thoughts. When a state of inconsistency exists, individuals are motivated to modify their thoughts as a way of restoring consistency. Also positing an inherent desire for cognitive stability, *balance theory* (Heider, 1958/2013) applies to systems involving three elements, typically signifying a triadic relationship between the self, another person and an object/event. Being attracted to the GCC while having a partner or best friend that is strongly nationalistic creates tension and is thus an example of an unbalanced structure. On the other hand, *optimal distinctiveness theory* (Brewer, 1993) proposes that people face ambivalence arising from the conflict between their intrinsic need to belong with some social group and satisfying their motivation to be distinct from that same group. There are cases when self-esteem may be enhanced by attaining a positively distinctive social identity, such as when an individual identifies with a group that is disadvantaged, or with a group that is usually seen by others as suffering from a negative intergroup comparison (Crocker et al., 1994), for example, when the person aspires to identify with an

outgroup culture (i.e., xenocentrism, the admiration or preference of an external cultural group over the ingroup; Kent & Burnight, 1951).

Other people's impressions are also important for social identity formation. According to *self-verification theory* (Swann, 2011), individuals desire coherence and stability with respect to their identity and want to be recognized and understood by others in ways that correspond to their firmly held beliefs and feelings about themselves. If necessary, they will take action to confirm and defend their identity. Such actions include developing attitudes that assist in identity self-verification, acquiring the symbols and signs (e.g., brands) connected to their identity, and maintaining relationships with groups that enable a sense of collective belongingness.

Social identity is affected by proximity and exposure to other cultural groups, and *acculturation* can occur firsthand and indirectly. The most prominent acculturation model is that promulgated by Berry (1997), in reference to his work on the cultural change patterns of immigrants and minorities vis-à-vis the mainstream society. His framework delineates four patterns arising from the permutation of two issues, concerning the value of (a) maintaining original cultural identity and traits, and (b) establishing contact with and participation in the host culture. The first pattern is *assimilation*, whereby immigrants and minorities gradually disassociate themselves from their original ethnic culture by embracing the mainstream cultural entity. Immigrants' motivation for assimilation is often due to their yearning to enjoy the benefits associated with acceptance by the host society (Triandis et al., 1986). The opposite pattern, *separation* (Berry, 1997), or *resistance* (Mendoza & Martinez, 1981) occurs when the ethnic minority reaffirms their identification with, and orientation toward their ingroup, while minimizing or excluding identification with the mainstream society. In cases when people experience alienation or stigmatization from the mainstream, upholding one's "need to belong" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) through ethnic affirmation (Triandis et al., 1986) is a way of promoting happiness. Under the *marginalization* pattern, instead of championing the traditional culture the individual becomes alienated from it, while also distancing themselves from the mainstream, perhaps due to having experienced discrimination. With *integration*, a mingling of traits occurs,

drawing from native and alternate cultural groups. Integration implies a mixture without the loss of distinction and is the most frequently documented cultural adjustment pattern. The long-term effect of integration is *cultural transmutation* (Mendoza & Martinez, 1981), as the comingled elements eventually fuse into a unique, creolized cultural entity and related customs (e.g., the Cajun culture and cooking of Louisiana).

Importantly, and from a behavioral standpoint, research has shown that the enactment of these acculturation patterns is often contextual: individuals can exhibit integration for one set of activities, and separation, assimilation, et cetera for other sets of activities (Cleveland et al. 2009). Cultural identity can also be triggered or exacerbated by the presence of similar others as well as by environmental and consumption cues, particularly in culturally relevant contexts. As I will detail later, these patterns can be readily extended to exposure to GCC. Similar to how minority cultures experience acculturation with respect to mainstream societies, mainstream societies around the world are increasingly facing acculturative pressures from global consumer culture. Culture change is now principally due to the sheer quantity and intensity of instruments promoting intercultural exchanges, including tourism, business travel, immigration, international trade and finance, global media and technology.

Consumer Acculturation and Global Consumer Culture

The terms “consumer” and “consuming” have progressively become the bases for labeling the human experience (Firat, 1995). *Consumer acculturation* is a subcategory of acculturation occurring at both the individual and group levels, centering on the agents and processes underlying the adoption and modification of information, values and activities typifying modern consumer culture (Peñaloza, 1994), which includes the emphasis put on satisfying individual pursuits and other characteristics connected to embracing a consumer-oriented ethos. The prevalence of media propagating advertising themes like self-indulgence and upward social mobility entices people to own and conspicuously display status

symbols connected to consumption (Cleveland, 2015; Cleveland et al., 2009). Social class was typically hereditary in pre-modern societies; however, in today's market economy, status is increasingly perceived as something achievable through consumption (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010).

Materialistic passion is inseparable from consumption. Consumption itself is impregnated with social symbolism, in that "the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society" (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). According to Baudrillard (1970/1998), the meaning of consumer objects can only be understood when viewed as a constellation (assemblage). For example, the combination of a designer watch, bespoke suit, luxury sports car and country club membership is symbolic of the lifestyle of someone with status and power, and this consumption constellation serves as inclusion and exclusion standards to demarcate social class boundaries (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010). This example demonstrates how consumer objects are part of the "extended self" (Belk, 1988; McCracken, 1986): how objects are used by individuals for personal expression as well as to signal membership in or apartness from a social groups, and how consumption "is institutionalized and legitimized as a language that operates beyond the control of the individual, yet one in which individuals need to be literate, so that they know what to consume to distinguish themselves" (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010, p. 305).

Cultural identities are asserted through lifestyles, and lifestyles reinforce cultural identities. *Symbolic self-completion theory* (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 2013) predicts that—similar to how actors in a play use props—individuals acquire and display products that they perceive will assist them to achieve identity completion. The fact that consumers extract and project cultural meaning when consuming many consumer products reflects the notion that a person's identity is wrapped up in their possessions. Testifying the notion of the progressive commodification of culture, of the six motivations that Shrum et al. (2013) enumerated for materialism, three connect to social membership. The first of these, belonging, stems from what was described earlier as the inherent human need for belongingness. To enhance their chances of acceptance by his workplace colleagues, a Chinese immigrant dwelling in Vancouver could become an enthusiastic fan of that city's professional

hockey team, and demonstrate this devotion by donning a *Vancouver Canucks* jersey on game days. That same individual may also reveal the second motivation, continuity, which relates to the maintenance of one's social identity, which might include shopping at one of the many Chinese grocery stores or subscribing to one of the many locally published Chinese-language newspapers. Likewise, distinctiveness, the third form of "other signalling," showcases consumption rituals that signal ingroup membership as well as apartness from other groups, which might be revealed when the immigrant acquires Chinese-made products and exhibits traditional artifacts when celebrating Chinese New Year.

Theodore Levitt's, 1983 publication in the *Harvard Business Review* is generally seen as the genesis of the discussion on *global consumer culture* (GCC). A substantial literature on GCC has developed (see Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019b), which builds upon theories connected to acculturation, self-concept and social identity, and draws further inspiration from the broader discourses on how globalization is affecting culture, impinging value systems, and in due course, altering the social identities, dispositions and behaviors of peoples worldwide. GCC has been described as a "cultural entity not associated with a single country, but rather a larger group generally recognized as international and transcending individual national cultures" (Alden et al., 1999, p. 80). In their study of the social identities and consumption of ethnic Greenlanders now living in Denmark, Askegaard et al. (2005) distinguished GCC as one of three acculturative influences, together with contemporary Danish culture, and traditional Greenlandic society. They described global consumer culture as foremost representing a transnational set of values and consumption practices heavily influenced by the consumer culture which arose in the United States, but that has since been diffused worldwide. Cleveland and Laroche (2007) conceived and operationalized *acculturation to global consumer culture* (i.e., AGCC) as an instrument for assessing the manner and extent to which consumers' psychologies have been shaped by GCC (Durvasula & Lysonksi, 2016). Their conceptualization spans seven dimensions.

First-hand intercultural contact via tourism, along with media, marketing and other indirect vehicles and forms of global exchanges operate as "cultural intermediaries" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 359), relentlessly

intertwining societies. The movement of people across borders not only entails the migration of people to other countries, but also points to the prevalence of inexpensive transportation options that quickly whisk business travelers and tourists across oceans. These physical flows of people are accelerating the dispersion of cultural elements, and creating fragments of any one place in many other places. The AGCC dimension of *traveling experiences and attitudes* represents consumers' experiences traveling aboard, thus providing an indication of the direct contacts the individual has with other cultures and locales. Travelers inadvertently diffuse elements of their own culture to locals while they are abroad, and once they return to their home country, they recount their experiences and exhibit objects acquired during their travels, further dispersing GCC.

Physical propinquity and direct interactions are no longer obligatory for nurturing cultural exchanges. McLuhan (1962) prophesied the arrival "...of an electronic communications system that would figuratively shrink the globe, begetting a global village whose constituents would have a keen sense of their collective, cosmopolitan identity" (Cleveland & Laroche, 2012, p. 66). Nearly universal access to the Internet has radically boosted opportunities for virtual exchanges between individuals and cultures. This infrastructure means that entertainment, other media programming and marketing communications are now truly reaching a global audience. As a dimension of AGCC, the *global mass media exposure* provided by the Internet, satellite television, blockbuster films, global sporting events and other international happenings fosters the development, acquisition and diffusion of the ethos and behavioral activities characterizing GCC. Although cultural meanings (e.g., about objects, rituals, etc.) typically spring from some specific location in the social world, the flow of this meaning is shaped and channeled by various mediating agents—within the media, advertising, entertainment and fashion industries—who, in effect, decide "which cultural products or ideas would have currency in popular taste" (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010, p. 302; McCracken, 1986).

In some respects, popular culture represents a universal language (Schneider, 2006). Examples include the worldwide embrace of Hip Hop and K-pop, cartoons and cosplay and fast food and fast fashion.

The diffusion of popular culture is facilitated by commercial interests (Cayla & Arnould, 2008) including, for example, Netflix, HBO, Hollywood and its counterparts in India, Pakistan and Nigeria: Bollywood, Lollywood and Nollywood. The Internet has however empowered consumers, enabling them to challenge and reinterpret cultural objects and codes. Given the ubiquity of social media, individuals have a hand in shaping the contours of popular culture and exerting a distorting influence on its dissemination (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Whatsapp, Facebook), in terms of what gets shared and seen among members of their social networks. In 2012, Gangnam Style, the K-pop single by PSY, became a global sensation, becoming the first online video to surpass 1 billion Internet hits.² The lyrics³ are loosely centered on the consumer lifestyle stereotyping the fashionably hip Gangnam district in Seoul.

As the culture of marketing is passed on clandestinely to consumers through global programming, it is also transmitted overtly, through advertising, product placement, lifestyle marketing, celebrity endorsements and other promotional activities (Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999). This meaning transfer is reinforced by the design and organization of virtual and physical retailing environments, as well as through transactions and customer loyalty programs. Using words, images, sounds and associations, multinational corporations transmit to individuals the attitudes, values, norms and traits that are implicit to GCC. The degree to which consumers are on the receiving end of this information represents *exposure to multinational marketing activities*.

Communication is indispensable for disseminating the non-concrete elements of culture across time, and between people and locations. The ability to communicate in a second (or subsequent) language provides the tools for understanding the values and rules for social engagement in places where that language is widely spoken (Cleveland et al., 2015). Hundreds of millions of people are learning and utilizing English as a second language, on top of the estimated half billion native speakers (i.e., *English language use and exposure*). Dominating popular culture, business

² <http://www.billboard.com/biz/articles/news/1483733/psys-gangnam-style-video-hits-1-billion-views-unprecedented-milestone>. Accessed January 2021.

³ <http://www.wetpaint.com/glee/articles/what-is-the-english-translation-of-psys-gangnam-style>. Accessed August 2021.

and the sciences, and used as the go-between tongue for international institutions and tourism, English is regarded as the lingua franca of the modern era (Graddol, 1997). English is extensively used for promotional appeals and on product signage, even in countries where few are fluent in the language, as a way of subtly conveying aspirations of modernity and upward social mobility (Alden et al., 1999).

Whereas the first four facets of AGCC represent exposure to external forces, the other three components of AGCC are internal, expressing individual traits. *Cosmopolitanism* is a favorable disposition toward foreign outgroups and cultures. Whereas tourists are content to be social spectators, cosmopolitans are eager to participate in daily life the way that locals do (Hannerz, 1990). Cosmopolitans have been characterized as “feeling at home when abroad” (Thompson & Tambyah, 1999): they not only readily engage with people of different backgrounds, they are confident that they have the proficiencies to negotiate varied cultural domains (Cleveland & Laroche, 2012). Seeking the very best cultural experiences that the world has to offer, cosmopolitans are well placed to introduce novel cultural components to the global community. The culture-sharing proclivity of cosmopolitans is motivated by their cultural curiosity and out of a desire to acquire cultural capital (Holt, 1998). Cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984) is a form of social status acquired by cosmopolitans through their accumulation of skills and knowledge, as they showcase their sophisticated tastes, aesthetics and customs. Cosmopolitans and locals share a common goal of maintaining cultural diversity, albeit with diverging motivations (Hannerz, 1990). The cosmopolitan ties together cultural differences without wanting to homogenize them, whereas the parochial rebuffs external influences to maintain ingroup distinctiveness but without concern for the cultural integrity of other groups.

Pursuing a common collection of symbolic consumption objects (e.g., H&M, Apple) and experiences (e.g., Hip-Hop, TikTok), so-called “global teens” epitomize the GCC (Alden et al., 1999) without ineludibly being cosmopolitan. *Openness to GCC* reflects the notion that individuals are able to selectively borrow from the global bazaar of ideas, objects and lifestyles. For these consumers, goal achievement is guided by a set of standards, drawn from this global forum as appraisal benchmarks (Robertson, 1992). The global marketplace, “through the myriad of

consumption choices it provides, presents the consumer with an opportunity to reproduce, resist, and transcend social standing” (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010, p. 309).

Self-identification with GCC goes beyond experimentation and transient participation with the symbols of GCC. Social identity theory argues that the stronger one identifies with a given group, the more this enduring attachment will shape their beliefs, principles and actions. Much like how parochial individuals cleave to indigenous traditions, the self-identified global consumer is motivated to act out their life in harmony with the belief systems and lifestyles that are perceived as inherent to GCC.

Never The Twain Shall Meet. How Does GCC Align, Comingle or Conflict with Other Social Identities?

Appadurai (1990) states that “the central problem of today’s global interaction is the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization” (p. 295). People observe globalization against the backdrop of their socio-historical circumstances, and these subsequently shape their worldview (Powell & Steele, 2011). Receptivity to GCC depends partly on the worldview of the receiving consumer, which in turn is a function of how GCC is congruent with his or her own society’s cultural norms and values, and whether GCC is sensed as a threat (e.g., cultural imperialism). To appreciate how GCC contributes to cultural identity, researchers must concurrently consider parochial cultural influences.

Chiu and Kwan (2016) differentiated exclusionary and integrative responses that people have to the altering landscapes of a globalizing world. Exclusionary responses occur when individuals deem outside influences as threatening. Ethnocentrism refers to the perception that the group to which one belongs is the most important, and that other cultures and groups are lesser than, or must be evaluated by, the standards of the ingroup (Hammond & Axelrod, 2006). Due to their insecurities,

perceptions of superiority, or strong ties to the existing local order, ethnocentric individuals generally rebuff outside influences as incompatible with the domestic ethos. Exclusionary responses can also be episodic. As public opinion of the United States in other countries soured under President Trump (Wike et al., 2017), so perhaps too did receptivity to those aspects of GCC perceived as “American.” Integrative responses ensue in cases where outside influences are embraced as sources of valuable information and creativity. People that are enthusiastic about the opportunities to learn from other cultures (cosmopolitanism), that are only weakly connected to the local society (xenocentrism, or marginalization), or that aspire to reap the perceived benefits associated with membership in modern consumer culture (identification with GCC) have a predisposition toward integrative reactions (Cleveland & Balakrishnan, 2019).

Drawing from acculturation theory (Berry, 1997) we can extricate two patterns of exclusionary responses to GCC: separation and marginalization. Under separation, group members will be driven to resist globalization (and GCC) if it is perceived as menacing to their distinct identity and detrimental to ingroup cohesiveness (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019b; Giddens, 1990). Some consumers equate GCC with Americanization (Kohut & Stokes, 2006); an increasingly outdated viewpoint that is nevertheless informed by the longstanding, disproportionate influence of American popular culture, media, and brands on the lives of many individuals around the world. Fears that their culture is being displaced or overwhelmed by the GCC motivate many individuals to resist globalization and to defend their unique ethnic and national practices and values.

Resistance

At the communal level, some groups seek to resist global consumer culture and engage in forms of neo-ethnicism; for example, in the form of religious orthodoxy (Barber, 1996). The belief that GCC essentially constitutes cultural colonialism provokes feelings of tribalism, and a

tendency toward ethnic or national reaffirmation, and possibly, fundamentalism. Psychological reactance theory (Brehm, 1966) postulates that when the behavioral freedom of a person is constrained through elimination or the threat of elimination, that person will experience an unpleasant motivational state of arousal (reactance) that prompts them to retain the behavior that is threatened—to preserve their personal freedom. Research has also documented that people can experience vicarious reactance—a person can experience the feeling of having their freedom restricted, even if they are not personally implicated in the restriction but rather, as a spectator to the situation (Sittenthaler et al., 2015). This can explain why some people harbor antiglobalization sentiments (elaborated later) even when they themselves (or their own culture) are not immediately threatened with GCC, if they sense that the unique character of another society (e.g., an indigenous culture) is at risk. Arguably the biggest impediment to the development of global identity is when people collectively believe that their cultural identity is under threat of dilution or replacement. Perceived assimilation into GCC (Levitt, 1983) has triggered a strong counter reaction among some people, who become motivated to defend their local cultures; paradoxically leading to a reduction of homogeneity (Cleveland et al., 2011).

Marginalization

Some people may be unsuccessful at navigating the tensions at the juncture of globalization and local traditions. Rejecting adherence to the spatially based identities connected to GCC, and to ethnic or national society, they may instead pursue belongingness with counterculture entities. Although counterculture movements take root on the fringes of society (e.g., the 1960s hippie subculture, and later the inner-city movements of punk and hip-hop), features of them are often adopted and modified by the mainstream consumer culture (Sklair, 1995). Factions to refute GCC are led by individuals such as the iconoclast author Naomi Klein (2009) in her bestseller book, *No Logo*, by activists

like Greta Thunberg who rail against the wastefulness and environmental degradation accompanying materialistic consumer culture,⁴ and by groups such as Adbusters who describes itself as “anti-advertising.”⁵ However, the “...centrality of consumption to identity and to social life, combined with the diversity of consumers and types of consumption, present a difficult challenge to consumer activists seeking culture change” (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004, p. 698).

Cultural convergence is analogous to assimilation. Levitt (1983) contends that with globalization, cultural differences will inexorably wither away, and that individuals will come to identify more with GCC and less with ethnic, national, etc. social groups. World systems theory (Wallerstein, 2004) depicts a world divided into core countries and periphery countries. As the command centers of the global economy, the leading cities of the core countries—New York, London, etc.—have a disproportionate influence on the creation and flavoring of GCC. The periphery countries are dependent on the core countries which, because the latter are in control of the levers of capital and set the rules for international trade (Smith, 1979), are seen as importers of GCC. Also known as cultural imperialism (Wilk, 1998), Coca-colonization (Hannerz, 1992), or McWorld (Barber, 1996), this viewpoint assumes that most individuals are passive: easily beguiled by the materialistic values conveyed by mass media and advertising channels, local cultures stand little chance against the seductive, slick packaging of GCC.

Also contrary to Levitt’s (1983) prediction of inevitable cultural homogenization, the marketing literature has detailed that many consumers are constructing a bicultural or multicultural identity, drawing from global, local and perhaps foreign cultural narratives simultaneously (Cleveland et al., 2011, 2013). According to Kurasawa (2004), a defining characteristic of many people is that they simultaneously possess “multilayered local, national and global identities” (p. 240). Whether particular aspects of this heterogenic cultural identity are salient and operational depends on situational circumstances. Over time, the

⁴ <http://harvardpolitics.com/united-states/youth-demand-climate-action-in-global-school-strike/>. Accessed August 2021.

⁵ <https://www.adbusters.org/> (Accessed August 2021).

co-presence of these multiple layers will result in *cultural hybridization*. As a contributing factor to the development of GCC, *glocalization* (Robertson, 1992)—essentially, a form of cultural hybridization—describes how local populations adjust to and indigenize GCC, as well as how components of local culture components are appropriated and recontextualized into global forms (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019b). Kjeldgaard and Ostberg (2007) offer the example of Scandinavian coffee culture, whereby the *flâneur café* culture popularized worldwide by Starbucks—itself, loosely based on the traditional Italian café—has been modified to appeal to Scandinavian sensibilities and aesthetics. These authors argue that given the impracticality of isolating oneself from GCC, the inclusion of local aspects into global consumption is a way of projecting a distinctive collective identity.

GCC is essentially a creolized culture, constituted by the transmutation of multiple layers blended together in different quantities and speeds in different places. I foresee the emergence of several global consumer cultures, each of which represents how GCC has been variably indigenized to become compatible with local traditions and sensibilities, and each iteration possessing unique artifacts and lifestyles. In most places, one or several transfigurations of GCC will coincide (and sometimes clash) with cultures and accompanying social identities deeply ensconced in tribal and other territorial meanings, as well as with identities connected to one's gender, generation, occupation and even subcultures connected to pastimes and diversions (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995).

Reaching beyond the global bicultural identity position proposed by Arnett (2002) and others, Chen et al. (2008) claim that globalization nurtures the formation of creolized identity arising "...from the selective incorporation of cultural elements from the various cultural world-views and practices to which a person has been exposed during his or her life" (p. 806). *Creolization* is the least researched and thus most speculative outcome of cultural globalization. Historical analogues to creolization can however be found in relation to how various New World cultures, such as Mexican culture, developed over time through the fusion of European characteristics with indigenous traits (Diaz-Guerrero, 1976).

Post-assimilationist globalization has drawn the interest of interpretivist researchers (e.g., Askegaard et al., 2005; Cayla & Eckhardt, 2008) but given that creolization unfolds over decades, empirical research is thorny.

Antiglobalization

As the saying goes, “a rising tide lifts all boats.” Thanks to globalization, an unparalleled number of people have been lifted out of poverty (Bergh & Nilsson, 2014). While economic disparities between Western and developing countries have been declining, within countries, however, there are mounting pecuniary inequalities and cultural cleavages. Many people feel that they have been left behind at the dock by globalization and attending deindustrialization, becoming poorer while holding the belief that an elite few have profited enormously. This view has some truth because wealthy people are better able to move their assets to places that can yield the best returns. By many measures, the gap between rich and poor is growing, and there is a diminishing proportion of people occupying the middle ground (Piketty, 2014).

Globalization has become a shorthand for attributing many of the world’s most pressing problems (Green & Griffith, 2002). The intensification and consolidated influence of globalization have fuelled disquiet about its nature and economic impact, on both the right and the left of the political spectrum. Moreover, there is a growing belief that national sovereignty is being eroded and replaced by a global order that eludes government control and is seemingly unaccountable to individual citizens of countries (Goodhart, 2001). Populist politicians foment misperceptions or exaggerate the threats posed by globalization, international institutions, foreigners and neoliberalism, as a way of garnering support. These vituperative standpoints have found sympathetic ears, as evidenced at the ballot box (the election of Donald Trump, the Brexit referendum, etc.).

In his 1941 book, *Escape from Freedom*, Erich Fromm (1994) wrote about the innate need that humans have for order and security, particularly during times of perceived turmoil. Authoritarian politicians that promise the restoration of some (often imaginary) old order become

attractive to people looking to regain a sense of certainty and pride when experiencing feelings of insecurity and personal inadequacy. Such feelings are apt to occur among those experiencing economic displacement from the forces of globalization. Indeed, Broz et al. (2021) showed that the upsurge in populist voting was greatest in those American counties with declining economic and social conditions.

National cultures and identities are not at risk of imminent obsolescence due to globalization. When confronted with a threat, the natural instinct of societies is to circle the wagons. The COVID-19 pandemic and the attending economic freefall represent the single biggest threat to globalization that has been witnessed in decades. It may take a decade to get globalization back on the track it was prior to the pandemic, which ironically has served to emphasize how much the distances between different societies have shriveled, at least in a virtual sense. It is important to recall other recent periods where antiglobalization sentiments have been ascendant, such as after the 9/11 terrorist attack, the 2007–2008 global financial crisis, and the accompanying severe economic recession that wracked most countries. Much like earlier episodes of antiglobalization, perhaps many of the antagonists are not against globalization itself, but rather are frustrated about the disproportionate gains accrued by some and the harms and feelings of hopelessness experienced by others.

Globalization and GCC: Pull vs. Push Forces

GCC flourishes in places and during times when globalization is ascendant. Globalization itself is nourished or stalled by various factors (Table 4.1), which can be categorized into pull forces (those that favor globalization, that pull people toward GCC, and that foster a global identity), and push forces (those that are detrimental to globalization, that suppress GCC, and that discourage the development of a global identity). The push and pull forces are further classifiable into distinct causal elements.

At the top are forces driven by coordinated political bodies, including geopolitical, institutional and governmental factors (e.g., IMF, WTO). Next are forces driven primarily by profit-oriented entities (economic, technological, media, and corporate factors). In terms of the former,

Table 4.1 Pull vs. Push Forces of Globalization and Global Consumer Culture

Category	<i>Pull (Favorable) Forces</i>	<i>Push (Detrimental) Forces</i>
Geopolitical, institutional and government	Democracy	Autarky
	Neoliberalism	Customs
	Hegemony	Tariffs, protectionism
	WTO/IMF/UN/EU	Export controls
	Free trade	Censorship
	Open borders	Political tensions
	Transportation infrastructure	War
	GDP growth	GDP stagnation/decline
	Economies of scale/scope	Supply chain bottlenecks
	Foreign direct investment	
Economic, technological, media and corporate	Multinational corporations	
	Global brands	
	Global supply chains	
	Outsourcing	
	Containerization	
	Computerization/digitalization	
	Internet/connectivity	
		Social media
		Inequality
Societal, cultural and movements	Tourism	Antiglobalization
	Hybridization/creolization	Nationalism, neoethnicity
	Multiculturalism	Xenophobia/ethnocentrism
	Migration & mobility	Localism
	Education	Fundamentalism
	Emancipation	Repatriation
		Balkanization/secessionism
		Terrorism
Individual	Cosmopolitanism	Prejudice/racism
	Xenocentrism	Ethnocentrism
	Global identity	Insecurity/fear
Natural		Pandemics
		Anthropogenic climate change
		Resource shortages

many developments over the past five years have been detrimental to the goal of global integration. Examples include the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union, the withdrawal of the United States from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the punitive tariffs imposed by the Trump administration with the goal of easing the U.S. trade deficit, the expanding reach of the “Great Firewall of China” (describing pervasive forms of Internet censorship in that country), the ongoing refugee crisis in Europe and the strain on the passport-free

Schengen Area, the exclusion of Chinese firms such as Huawei from the construction of 5G technology networks in many Western countries, and recurring episodes of “rare earths” export restrictions imposed by China (and the crippling effect upon Japan’s high tech sector). Rising political tensions, such as between the United States and Russia due to election meddling and the annexation of Crimea, and an increasingly assertive China, have also put the brakes on globalization, further stoking antiglobalization sentiments (Steenkamp, 2019), nationalism, and xenophobia.

The business activities of transnational corporations (exporting, foreign direct investment, supply chain decisions, innovation, advertising, etc.) are powerful, interwoven forces driving globalization and the dissemination of GCC. Widely viewed as wielding disproportionate “economic, political, and cultural clout” (Thompson & Arsel, 2004, p. 633) relative to their local counterparts, multinationals serve as lightning rods for the discontent toward globalization. In places with lackluster economic growth, the appeal of GCC is waning. This has been corroborated by recent surveys that show that in the United States, Britain, France and numerous other countries, fewer than half of respondents believe that globalization is a “force for good,” with many believing that only the wealthy profit from globalization (Steenkamp, 2019).

Next are societal (including social movements) and cultural factors, which are less centrally coordinated; and individual factors, which take place in people’s minds. Philosophical movements from democracy to emancipation, and from #OccupyWallStreet to #BlackLivesMatter, have become global dialogues amplified by global media (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019b). Finally, there are natural factors, although the category term is probably a misnomer since these phenomena are typically caused by or exacerbated by human activities. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has stirred many people to look for a scapegoat: some may blame China, others the World Health Organization, but for many the biggest target of fury is the neoliberal global world order.

Several factors arguably span several categories and straddle the push/pull boundary, for example, social media and inequality, which traverse the social and economic realms, and which could plausibly

encourage or inhibit globalization and GCC. The ubiquity and pervasiveness of digital technologies (especially mobile phones) mean that the virtual world encapsulates most of the world's population, as opposed to the online world of two decades ago, which was prodigiously Western. In the West, ethnic minority communities expanding faster than the mainstream, and consequently the Internet population in Western countries is becoming increasingly multicultural. On the one hand, having most of the globe's people plugged into the virtual world vastly increases the opportunities for exchanging information across social groups. On the other hand, social media also promotes neo-tribalism (Robards, 2018), as people can retreat into online communities of affinity groups—be they ethnic, media, ideological and otherwise like-minded folk—that are relatively siloed from each other. While rising inequality provides a fertile ground for fostering materialism and the expression of social status through consumption, this disparity will also sow the seeds of discontent (antiglobalization, and repelling GCC). Given the threats posed to domestic security and to the economy, pandemics, resource shortages and climate change can exacerbate disenchantment with globalization and its proponents, yet the global nature of these problems, representing what Sherif (1956) labeled as superordinate goals, necessitate cooperative interaction among societies worldwide.

Conclusion

In marketing, researchers have embraced the notions of the extended self (Belk, 1988), symbolic consumption (Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), the material self (Bagozzi et al., 2020) and customer-based brand equity (Keller, 1993), indicating that many firms are moving toward implementing a customer-centric perspective about products and brands, and are dismantling the formerly dominant, company-centric standpoint. Companies do not choose their customers as much as customers choose their brands. By embodying cultural symbols, the consumption constellations held by consumers (comprised of products and brands), function as signals of cultural intricacies and transformation, not only in terms of how customers see and express themselves, but also, in terms of how they

wish for others to see them, which in turn, influences their self-concept. This is especially true for consumers having to navigate the crossroads of multiple social memberships.

Consumer-based brand equity is the additional value bestowed on products—including that which is connected to social identity—that is reflected in the way consumers think, feel and act *vis-à-vis* the particular brand. Customers prefer brands that they can relate to and that have meanings, including but not limited to, meanings connected to one's social identity or identities; customers are often willing to pay a premium relative to brands that are not connected, or that are connected to undesirable social groups (Winit et al., 2014). These meanings change over place and time, because of situational influences and accumulating life experiences, respectively. Of relevance to this chapter, the salience, and importance of one or several social identities fluctuate and evolve because of changing circumstances and the presence and types of other people present, as well as due to contexts and cues that serve as triggers.

Accompanying episodes of resurgent nationalism, a growing number of consumers are alarmed about the ascendancy of global brands and how these represent threats to or stir feelings of nostalgia about beloved equivalent domestic counterparts (Bartsch et al., 2019; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012). Research has demonstrated that consumers often strive to authenticate, re-center and express their traditional identity and heritage through the re-enactment of local customs and rituals, and the consumption of local brands (Arnould & Price, 2003; Askegaard et al., 2005; Zhou & Belk, 2004). By themselves, antiglobalization sentiments can adversely affect attitudes about global brands (Dimofte et al., 2008). However, what resembles an ethnocentric backlash by consumers may stem from economic fears and employment dislocations occurring due to technological innovations and the forces of globalization.

The paradox posed by globalization is that it “divides as it unites” (Bauman, 1998, p. 2). The major issue facing policy makers is to find ways of reconfiguring globalization, in order to preserve the benefits of relatively open economies and borders, while curbing the financial and environmental excesses of unrestrained global capitalism. At the individual level, in order to combat the appeal of xenophobes and antiglobalization populists, the psychologist Michele Gelfand argues that

people first need to “feel safe.”⁶ Research into individuals’ dispositions toward and affiliation with GCC can shed light on self-concept and identity, subjective well-being and belongingness, orientations toward cultural ingroups and outgroups (both at home and abroad), consumption behaviors, receptivity and resistance to cultural change, and perhaps, even inform voting patterns.

In a recent article, I stated that GCC “...is a reinforcing process shaped by global culture flows, acculturation, deterritorialization and cultural and geographic specific entities. This process allows individuals to indigenize GCC, and GCC to contemporaneously appropriate aspects from myriad localized cultures, producing creolized cultures” (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019b, p. 556). This process does not occur in a vacuum, but rather is affected by sporadic events and long-term trends. Understanding globalization as a process rather than a destination (Legrain, 2002) makes it easier to see that there are many forces that encourage or impede it.

These forces similarly interfere with the adoption or rejection of GCC. As GCC interacts with geography, domestic cultural ingredients, social class and situational circumstances, it will increasingly fragment into distinctive forms. Moreover, the underlying personality of GCC (and its various permutations) is “progressively shifting from West to East, as the planet’s relative economic epicenter once again swings back to the Orient” (Cleveland & Bartsch, 2019b, p. 570). The present, partial pause of globalization opens up an opportunity for GCC in different world regions to become further indigenized. Over time, these distinct iterations of GCC will be exported to the global community, and the importing societies will impose further modifications to make them more palatable to locals. Notwithstanding periodic setbacks, the wheel of GCC will continue to turn and churn.

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/jan/02/authoritarian-leaders-people-safe-voters> (Accessed May 2021).

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