

**CCT: Ten Years Gone (and Beyond)**

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## STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

### **Purpose**

This paper reflects on the development of Consumer Culture Theory, both as a field of research and as an institutional classification, since the publication of Arnould and Thompson (2005).

### **Methodology/approach**

This paper takes a conceptual/historical orientation that is based upon the authors' experiences over the course of the ten year CCT initiative (including numerous conversations with fellow CCT colleagues).

### **Findings**

The authors first discuss key benchmarks in the development of the CCT community as an organization. Next, the authors highlight key intellectual trends in CCT research that have arisen since the publication of their 2005 review and discuss their implications for the future trajectories of CCT research.

### **Originality/value of paper**

Arnould and Thompson (2005) has proven to be an influential paper in terms of systematizing and placing a widely accepted disciplinary brand upon an extensive body of culturally oriented consumer research. The CCT designation has also provided an important impetus for institution building. The ten year anniversary of this article (and not incidentally the CCT conference from which the papers in this volume hail) provides a unique opportunity for the authors to comment upon the broader ramifications of their original proposals.

**Keywords:** Consumer Culture Theory, Marketing, Marketing Management, Assemblage Theory, Institutional Perspectives, Post-humanist Sociology

Blind stars of fortune, each have several rays  
On the wings of maybe, down in birds of prey  
Kind of makes me feel sometimes, didn't have to grow  
But as the eagle leaves the nest, it's got so far to go

“Ten Years Gone” – Robert Plant, Flames of Albion Music

Just over a decade has passed since we published a “review” paper in the *Journal of Consumer Research* entitled “Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research” (Arnould and Thompson 2005). We place review in quotation marks because aggregating and systematizing the burgeoning body of culturally oriented work published in *JCR* had only been our formal goal. Beyond this ostensible objective, we also aspired to broader paradigmatic aims. We hoped that this paper would help to dispel enduring misconceptions of this research tradition as a sphere of exotica and esoterica, lacking in practical value or theoretical consequence and, second, provide an orienting perspective that would better enable researchers working inside and outside of this eclectic research tradition to better grasp the theoretical questions and concerns addressed by these contextually grounded investigations. Last but not least, we envisioned CCT as an academic brand that might circumvent the pejorative associations that had come to haunt prior monikers such as qualitative consumer research, interpretivist consumer research, or postmodern consumer research.

The ten year anniversary of this article, not incidentally, corresponds to the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Consumer Culture Theory Conference. In keeping with the critical reflections theme of the conference, and its guiding questions of “where have we [CCT] been?” and “where are we going?” (<http://www.cctarkansas.com/news/>, May 28, 2014), the conference chairs asked us to reflect on the article, its consequences, and future trajectories. Toward this end, we will discuss

the institutional and academic reverberations of the CCT initiative, many of which had been unexpected and quite inspiring.

### **INSTITUTIONAL REVERBERATIONS**

While motivated by large ambitions, our expectations about the extent to which any of our lofty aims would be realized were quite modest, given the forces of inertia that pervade academic institutions. However, the CCT article helped to spark changes that have exceeded any transformative outcomes that we had envisioned.

First and foremost, we never anticipated how the CCT frame would function as an incitement to discourse. Our first inkling of this consequence came at the 2005 Association for Consumer Research conference (San Antonio, Texas) and the 2005 European Association for Consumer Research Conference (Goteburg, Sweden) where this academic brand and its implications, perhaps more than any other aspect of the paper, was met with a heady mix of excitement, skepticism, and just a touch of antagonism among those who suspected this initiative might harbor a North American Business school colonizing agenda. These engaging and, at times, impassioned conference conversations brought to the fore a number of reflexive questions such as whether the heterodox research interests we aggregated under the CCT umbrella could form a coherent academic community that maintained and respected its internal diversity and if so, oriented around what questions, concerns, and pursuits. This reflexive frisson instigated a series of papers that aimed to debate, clarify, refine, and expand various aspects of our original proposal (see Arnould and Thompson 2007; Askegaard 2014; Askegaard and Linnet 2011; Askegaard and Scott 2013; Bode and Østergaard 2013; Domen 2013; Dominici, Basile, and

Palumbo 2013; Earley 2014; Fischer and Sherry 2009; Fitchett, Patsiaouras, and Davies 2014; Moisander, Peñalozas, and Valtonen 2009; Thompson, Arnould and Giesler 2013).

Also much to our surprise, the CCT brand quickly gained traction in the broader field of marketing. It soon became a recognized research designation across leading journals and conferences sponsored by the Association for Consumer Research and the American Marketing Association, that stood alongside other familiar subdisciplinary acronyms such as BDT (Behavioral Decision Theory) and JDM (Judgment and Decision Making). This rapid diffusion suggested to us that the CCT demarcation did indeed redress a gap in the sense making resources that the marketing and consumer researchers had been using to classify culturally oriented studies of consumption in the matrix of knowledge production.

In particular, the CCT brand signaled that this research tradition investigated the complexities of consumer culture in ways that contributed to a larger theoretical conversation, rather than constituting a series of one-off case studies. However, the “theory” designation also lent itself to hypostatization whereby CCT was sometimes interpreted to be a singular, nomothetic project. These risks of reification also had an institutional complement. In effect, questions were raised as to whether the systematizing aspects of CCT might function as a disciplinary regime that imposed a constraining, rigid orthodoxy upon researchers working under its institutional auspices (Bode and Østergaard 2013; Firat 2012).

This discursive to and fro has helped to articulate a clearer understanding of CCT as a heteroglossic (c.f., Bakhtin 1981), and conceptually dynamic field of inquiry that encompasses a multiplicity of theoretical approaches, methodological orientations, representational practices, and which speaks to a range of stakeholders. As with any heterodoxic system, potential points of cleavage also lurk within these affirmations of pluralism – such as philosophical tensions

between those who view the realm of marketing practice (and often corporate power structures) as a valuable source of research opportunities and important inflection points for creating more sustainable market systems (c.f., Martin and Schouten 2009; Press, et al. 2014) versus those who regard participation in the corporate order as being anathema to a critical theory project, as well as being an invitation to neo-liberal co-optation (Cova, Maclaran, and Bradshaw 2013; Fitchett 2015; Fitchett, Patsiaouras and Davies 2014).

In regard to this latent tension, we believe that CCT community is best served by an ethos of critical ecumenicalism. From our standpoint, this orientation can best leverage the synergies among researchers who wish to conduct research and pursue social change through collaborative projects with corporate actors and those who call for more radical critiques and reformations of the capitalist system (Earley 2014; Schor 2011). To further elaborate, we feel that a disengagement from the corridors of corporate power, whereby marketing practices are critiqued from a distance, are likely to be a less nuanced and less effectual than critiques grounded in more specific accounts of the cultural and institutional forces that shape corporate strategies (Cayla and Arnould 2013; Cayla and Zwick 2012; Holt 2012; Schneider and Woolgar 2012).

This ongoing dialogue on CCT's axiological, epistemological, and ontological aims has also produced a fuller recognition of our research community's polysemic and multifaceted institutional history. This genealogical complexity supports and indeed necessitates a diversity of origin myths, each of which provide imbricated and contestable constructions of CCT's institutional formulation and position (Askegaard 2014; Askegaard and Scott 2013; Bode and Østergaard 2013; Levy 2015; Thompson, Arnould and Giesler 2013) and the corresponding forms of structuration (Giddens 1984) that follow from these contingent historical arrangements.

Of course, vibrant research fields are not built by reflection and discourse alone.

Through the diligent efforts of CCT community members too numerous to mention, the CCT brand has been able to serve a mobilizing function. This ongoing process of institution building was jumpstarted by the first CCT conference—hosted by the University of Notre Dame and co-chaired by Russ Belk and John Sherry in the summer of 2005. Originally planned as a biennial event, the surprising success of the first CCT conference led to the annual gathering we know and enjoy. In conjunction with the conference (which now rotates between North America and Europe), the ever entrepreneurial Markus Giesler began the Levy award (circa 2008) which recognizes the best CCT article based on a dissertation and importantly, pays homage to the path blazing legacy of Sid Levy. Once the annual conference became established as an important node in the CCT network, the next institution building process was the formation of a formal organization—the Consumer Culture Theory Consortium—which now sponsors the CCT conference and the related biennial Qualitative Data Analysis workshop. CCT’s institutional network has been further extended by a gamut of academic events (the Canons of Classics hosted by University of Southern Denmark; Seminar on Consumption, Markets, and Culture hosted by Bilkent University; Seminar on Research Methods hosted by SKEMA in Lille, France; the C4 seminar series hosted by consortium of schools in the Chicago, Ill area, to name a few). Last but not, the CCT community is being enlarged and enriched by increasing participation from researchers hailing from Africa, Asia, the Pacific Rim, and South America.

### **Theoretical Reverberations**

While institution building is important to organizing and sustaining a viable research community, CCT’s *raison d’être* is the production of knowledge about consumer culture that can benefit a variety of stakeholders. The last ten years have witnessed an impressive degree of

theoretical development that we will discuss along four conceptual axes: 1) the ontological conception of culture as distributed networks; 2) the politics of consumption; 3) consumer marketing theoretics; and 4) regional cultural theoretics.

### **Culture as a Distributed Network**

Drawing from developments in globalization studies (Appadurai 1996; Hannerz 1996; Urry 2000), we characterized CCT research as implementing a “distributed view of cultural meaning” (Hannerz 1992, 16) that highlighted “the dynamics of fragmentation, plurality, fluidity, and the intermingling (or hybridization) of consumption traditions and ways of life” (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 869). At the time of this writing, the general idea that cultures were indeed fragmented, dynamic, mobile (i.e., transported along different scapes) was well accepted in the CCT community. However, the number of studies that theoretically illuminated these interlinkages was fairly limited and relied upon the theoretical vernaculars of glocalization (Ger and Belk 1996; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard 2006; Thompson and Arsel 2004) and post-assimilationist acculturation theory (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2004; Luedicke 2011; Peñaloza 1994; Oswald 2004) to explore the ways in which cultural forms were hybridized and transformed by a variety of global flows.

The broader theoretical implication of these studies, however, remained fairly encapsulated from the more dominant assumptions about the organization of culture that framed CCT research. In the majority of CCT studies, culture was conceptualized as a bounded system of collectively shared meanings, values, norms, ideals, and conventions. Through the concepts of subcultures of consumption, consumer tribes, consumption communities, and consumer micro-



cultures, CCT researchers articulated an understanding of consumer culture as a network of fragmented, though often interlinked, subsystems which provided consumers with a diversified array of resources for identity work. However, these spatialized accounts glossed over the more theoretically innovative implications of a distributed view of culture, such as the fluidity among cultural categories and classifications, the heterogeneous and contingent quality of cultural formations, and flat ontologies whereby dispersed actants come into contingent alignments through self-organizing, reconfiguring, and reciprocal processes (e.g., displacements, transformations translations) that defy hierarchical scaling (as in conventional macro-to-micro mappings) (cf. Delanda 2006 : LaTour 2005).

In the years following our 2005 paper, the discursive structure of CCT has been dramatically transformed by the infusion of theoretical vernaculars hailing from assemblage theory, which itself encompasses concepts and logics drawn from actor-network theory (Callon 1986; Latour 2005), practice theory (see Warde 2005), and governmentality studies (Foucault 2004; Zwick, Bonsu, and Darmody 2008). As discussed by Allen (2011, 154), assemblage theory allows for the possibility that “heterogeneous elements can hold together without actually forming a coherent whole”; a conceptual possibility which stands in contrast to the splicing and blending logic manifest in CCT studies of glocalization. Seen in this light, the glocalization literature, which highlighted intersections among indigenized and globalized cultural forms, only partially broached the heterogeneous complexity, institutional indeterminacy and recombinatory capacities implied by the concept of assemblages.

CCT researchers deploying assemblage theory have moved beyond the hybridizing logic of glocalization to investigate the shifting socio-material arrangements and the repurposed elements/actants that are variously aligned within these heterogeneous networks, whether

manifested in the context of family identities (Epp and Price 2010; Epp, Schau, and Price 2014), the outsourcing of parental responsibilities (Epp and Velagelati 2014), the negotiation of elderly identities (Barnhart and Peñaloza 2013), consumption communities (Thomas, Price, and Schau 2013), the emergence of new consumer-driven markets (Martin and Schouten ), advertising imagery (Bjerrisgaard, Kjeldgaard, and Bengtsson 2013), the evolution of brand meanings (Giesler 2012), sustainable consumption practices and attendant market transformations (D'Antone and Spencer 2015; Daniel and Sirieix 2012), and human-pedigree pet relationships (Bettany 2007).

To more specifically cash out, the differences that have accrued from the “recruitment” of assemblage theory into the CCT heteroglossia, let us consider two recent entries into our subdisciplinary canon. Canniford and Shankar (2013) investigate how a community of surfers continuously perform a romantic experience of nature (oriented around ideals of the sublime, the pristine, the primitive, and the sacred) through complex and shifting assemblages of discourses, technologies, geographies, and purifying practices (the latter of which are needed to compensate for recurrent moments when the tenuous coherence of surfers’ assemblages is threatened by internal contradictions and insistencies). Addressing a contrasting consequence, Parmentier and Fischer (2015) use assemblage theory to explain the processes through which the audience for a brand dissipates (in this case, the long running reality television show, *America’s Next Top Model*). They conceptualize the brand as a fairly robust arrangement of diverse elements—including narratives, contestants, celebrity judges, audiences, discussion boards and social media, entertainment media, and the fashion brands who sponsored the show. Over time, new elements—new contestants, new judges, new narratives, new formats, and the changing popular culture meanings of the show host Tyra Banks—came into the matrix while displacing others.

They show how consumers over time begin to amplify discontinuities among these components, often expressing displeasure at the new configuration vis a vis prior ones, and ultimately reaching a point where the brand assemblage is no longer able to organize a viable market. Parmentier and Fischer (2014) then contrast their assemblage based theorization of brand audience dissipation to more established explanations grounded in the respective logics of consumer psychology (satiation theory), semiotics and cultural branding (Holt 2004).

While prior CCT research had, throughout the 1990's and millennial years, recognized that cultural systems were heterogeneous, polysemic, and marked by countervailing narratives and ideological tensions, these accounts remained wedded to a holistic ontology that presumed such historically disparate elements ultimately cohered as a kind of Gestalt. Moreover, the predominant theoretical vernaculars only afforded analyses contradictions and the strategies that consumers could use to assuage these tensions. In contrast, assemblage theory enables consumer researchers to better investigate how different elements come into contingent alignments and recursively shape their contextualized meanings and effects, and, in turn, how these extant relations shift as different elemental arrangements arise.

Yet, on closer inspection, some degree of theoretical and analytic conflation can be detected between prior studies and this new generation of assemblage theory research. Whereas actor-network theory distributes agency across a network of actants, many accounts of consumer culture assemblages tend to portray consumers as the self-directed architects of assembly. In this specific sense, the logic of assemblage begins to resemble other mix n' match agentic formulations that had currency in the CCT at the time of our 2005 review piece, such as bricolage, pastiche, co-creation, and prosumption; all of which presumed that consumers could create ensembles of market resources that accomplished individual and collective identity goals.

This conceptual slippage, may be emblematic of CCT researchers glossing over the Deleuzian roots of assemblage theory and its linkage to power relations and modes of resistance (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; Deleuze and Parnett 1987).

Deleuzian assemblages are rhizomatic structures which are infused by power relations that intersect and traverse each other than being imposed by top-down hierarchical orders. In effect, assemblages are not just contingent alignments of things but ways of ordering social life along specific vectors of power that legitimate and normalize certain actions, identities and practices, while blocking, prohibiting, or stigmatizing (pathologizing) others (Pridmore and Zwick 2013). For Deleuze, assemblages also provide lines of stratification—which tend to perpetuate status quo relations of power and lines of flight which present opportunities for disrupting and reworking extant relations of power and affording practices of rhizomatic resistance that could contest dispersed (and disciplining) power relations (Allen 2011).

In sum, we propose that CCT researchers' analyses of assemblages could become more theoretically distinct from prior CCT studies, and more critically informed, by tracing out the lines of stratification and lines of flight through which power relations (and moments of resistance and reassemblage) are undertaken.

### **The Politics of Consumption**

As a working definition (that also embraces the previously noted assemblage vernacular), we characterize the politics of consumption as being constituted by an ensemble of actors—reflexive consumers, activists, journalists, community organizers, organizational administrators, public policy makers, entrepreneurs, business executives, politicians, and technologies—who

mobilize to challenge, transform (or actively defend) status quo distributions of resources— be they material, ecological, socio-economic, ideological, or symbolic (cultural authority, legitimacy, status, etc.)— through marketplace practices and innovations. Almost invariably, these actions involve untangling and reconfiguring networks of power relations (hierarchical authorities, status systems, loci of exchange, normalized beliefs, dominant categories, disciplinary practices, and social conventions) in ways that produce new patterns of social relationships and identity positions which operate in conjunction with new distributive logics and ensuing points of conflict (Thompson and Ustüner 2015).

In our 2005 review, we collapsed studies on the politics of consumption into our organizing categories of “the Sociohistoric Patterning of Consumption” and “Mass-Mediated Marketplace Ideologies and Consumers’ Interpretive Strategies.” However, we could have highlighted a fairly substantial number of papers that illuminated the political dimensions of consumption and marketplace practices. Much like our classification framework, however, these political implications were often subsumed to more explicit theoretical foci, such as the identity work undertaken through politicized brand meanings (Holt 2002); or the subtle ways in which consumers’ social class backgrounds influence their choices and preferences (Allen 2002); though for exceptions to this tendency (see Crockett and Wallendorf 2004; Kozinets and Handelman 2004; Murray 2002; Murray and Ozanne 1991). In the ensuing years, CCT researchers have more directly theorized the intertwining of political ideologies, marketplace structures and performances, identity projects, and struggles over resources (Bradshaw, McDonagh, and Marshall 2006; Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Dolan and Scott 2009; Giesler 2008; Humphreys and Thompson 2014; Izberk-Bilgin 2012; Jafari and Goulding 2008; Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler 2010; Peñaloza and Barnhart 2011; Press et al. 2014; Sandikci

and Ger 2010; Shankar, Cherrier, and Canniford 2006; Tadajewski and Brownlie 2008; Tadajewski and Maclaran 2009; Varman and Belk 2009; Zhao and Belk 2008).

Two theoretical shifts have contributed to the politics of consumption becoming a more central, rather than subsidiary, topic of investigation. First, CCT researchers began to use Bourdieu's (1984) sociological framework to address the status conflicts that are often manifest in market-mediated social relationships. In much CCT research past and present, Bourdieu's account of cultural capital and social reproduction has primarily been used as a means to analyze how social class conditioning shapes consumer choices and preferences or creates distinctive consumer groupings and taste segments (Arsel and Bean 2013; Bardhi, Eckhardt, and Arnould 2012; Holt 1997, 1998). However, an increasing number of studies are now focusing on the underlying inequities in resource distribution that are reproduced or challenged through the deployment and acquisition of cultural capital (and the limitations posed by recalcitrant shortfalls in cultural capital) (see Bernthal, Crockett, and Rose 2005; Henry 2005; Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard, and Kristensen 2011; Ustüner and Holt 2007, 2010; Ustüner and Thompson 2012). This theoretical pivot has also placed CCT research in closer alignment with Bourdieu's critical project of tracing out the social and cultural conditions that legitimate and perpetuate socio-economic and political inequities and that create systematic barriers to attaining a democratic political order (see Wacquant 2004).

The second notable shift redresses a gap that we noted in our 2005 review; namely, that there was a relative paucity of CCT research investigating "the institutional forces that have shaped the marketplace and the consumer as a social category" (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 876). In the ensuing years, CCT researchers have adopted institutional perspectives to investigate how particular market practices gain or lose legitimacy (Humphreys 2010; Press, et

al. 2014) and how consumers, collectively mobilize to gain greater social legitimacy, access to new identity resources, social inclusion, or to exert a democratizing influences on the marketplace (Dolbec and Fischer 2015; Kristensen, Boye, and Askegaard 2011; Scaraboto and Fischer 2013). These institutionally framed CCT studies bring to light the complexities of structuration: that is, the ways in which institutional realities are recursively produced (and reconfigured) through coordinated actions and tacit social agreements among social actors which are, in turn, organized by the very institutional structures being enacted as objectified social realities (Barley and Tolbert 1997). Thus, an institutional lens directs CCT research toward structure-agency dialectics such as the historical shaping of consumption practices and the performance of consumer identities in a given field and the nexus of constraints and affordances which operate through these institutional processes.

Going forward, one potential path for theoretical innovative potential would be for CCT researchers to incorporate the analytic tools offered by assemblage theory into their institutional studies of consumer-marketplace relations. Assemblage theory would facilitate more granular analyses of institutional complexities, such as the ramifications that arise when practices from one social field are transplanted into another (such as in the gamut of public-private ventures that have arisen under the auspices of neo-liberal economic policies and mandates). Conversely, institutional theory can help CCT researchers avoid the problematic tendency to treat assemblages as a “tangled bundle of co-existing logics, each beating to its own rhythm” (Allen 2011, 156). Assemblages do not arise *ex nihilo* but are formulated within social fields having particular histories of established practices and institutionalized power relationships. Assemblages cohere, dissipate, and change within institutional fields. Much like structural anthropologist who lost sight of the broader societal contexts and meanings when meticulously

documenting the semiotic ordering of kinship systems (Cf., Geertz 1973), studies of assemblages can also devolve into intricate descriptions of juxtaposed elements, becoming a proverbial case of not recognizing the forest constituted by the trees. However, assemblages cohere, dissipate, and change within institutional fields and hence, their logic, functions, and governmental consequences should also be understood in their institutional (and hence historical) contexts (Foucault 2004).

### **Cultural Marketing Theoretics**

An additional trend being shepherded by scholars in the orbit of consumer culture theory is to extend cultural analysis into the realm of marketing and management theory. In other words, consumer culture theory becomes cultural marketing theoretics. This tendency was already present in such contributions as Cochoy's (1999, 2002) sociological investigations of marketing history and packaging, and of course may also be traced back to Sid Levy's seminal theoretical works which were rooted in marketing practice. Such work can fruitfully draw on a robust tradition of scholarship in organizational behavior, but which tends to elide three dimensional portrayals of consumers, precisely the strength of consumer culture theoretical work. While cultural marketing theory has been present in the marketing journals for some years, three recent edited collections exemplify these trends. The first is an edited volume by Penaloza, Özçağlar-Toulouse and Visconti (2012), *Marketing Management: A Cultural Perspective*, which sought to rewrite the classic headings of managerial marketing texts in cultural terms. Striving for a delicate balance between a critical re-theorization of marketing practice and a handbook for classroom use, the volume contains many useful chapters that can open up research on



managerial topics and especially international marketing to a more culturally reflexive lens. The second is *Inside Marketing*, edited by Zwick and Cayla (2011) which sought to peel the veil off of the world of marketing practitioners, following a template set by recent work authored by corporate ethnographers writing about their more specific practice in industry (Jordan 2013). As the editors state in their introduction, “the study of marketing needs to be rescued from the technocrats of marketing, who equate marketing scholarship with the refinement of a scientific and purely practical set of tools. This rescuing requires that we understand marketing as an economic and cultural practice (and therefore also as a political activity)” (Zwick and Cayla 2011, 16). The ensuing analyses explore these intersections of marketing, economics, and culture—and often framed in terms of Callon’s (2007) conceptualization of economics as socio-cultural and ideological performances among networks of actants—as constituted in contexts such as grocery stores (Cochoy 2011), focus groups (Grandclément and Gaglio 2011), cosmetic testing labs (Desroches and Marcoux 2011), customer loyalty programs (Pridmore and Lyon 2011), and gentrified neighborhoods (Zwick and Ozalp 2011). Thus, these collected works provide institutionally, historically, and culturally informed accounts of how diverse marketing-consumer assemblages engender a multiplicity of socio-cultural and political effects and promote particular orderings of the social, the symbolic, and the material.

And the final text edited by Collin-Lachaud (2014) provides a culturally enriched understanding and critique of primarily European contemporary retailing. Similarly infused with anthropological, textual, historical and sociological analyses, this text rethinks classic retail models, taking into account globalizing and digitizing trends, and resocializes retail clients as prosumers, bricoleurs, co-consumers, and flaneurs as well as families (rather than monadic decision makers) and as socially and culturally situated actors. The volume asserts the inevitably

social and historically contingent character of retailing as against the universalizing models of traditional marketing thought. These contributions realize an ambition often articulated by CCTC's past-president John Sherry that CCT scholars should devote more attention to books than heretofore given their prevalence in the parent disciplines of anthropology and sociology. Future work might well build on these forays to develop more interesting culturally grounded theories of issues in pricing, value chains, service experience (roughly complementing the Service Dominant Logic and Nordic School approaches to services; Arnould 2007), as well as the recent work on value (Kjeldgaard and Karababa 2014) to extend the reach of cultural approaches and, perhaps also the institutional credibility of such approaches inside the business academy.

### **Regionalization of Consumer Culture Theoretics**

A final trend is the maturation of regional reflections on consumer culture, a trend only likely to continue in the coming decade. This trend is very pronounced in the Nordic countries with the emergence of a vigorous Nordic CCT network, and has coalesced in France around the Normandy Research Days. The former meets regularly in locations around the Nordic zone, while the latter an annual research event that draws heavily from the sociologically inspired quarters of French and Italian marketing. A recent conference in Rouen drew 200 participants, not all within the consumer culture tradition, but many so inspired. One very interesting expression of this intellectual project is an edited volume in which marketing and consumer researchers summarize and comment upon the relevance of major French social scientists and philosophers for consumption studies and cultural marketing theoretics (Rèmy and Robert-

Demontrond 2014). If the Nordic CCT network is very concerned with the intersection between the strong social democratic traditions of the Nordic region, characterized by a strong state sector of the economy and consumption, the Franco-Italian network typically interrogates the intersection between recent currents in French social philosophy and consumption. A good example being the work of Boltansky and Thevenot (2006) recently translated into English. In their post-Bourdieuian sociology, the authors argue that actions are “justified” according to different logical regimes exemplified by six authors: civic (Rousseau), market (Adam Smith), industrial (Saint-Simon), domestic (Bossuet), inspiration (St. Augustine), and fame (Hobbes). But from this milieu has also come a recent volume of the *Revue M.A.U.S.S.*, famously critical of utilitarian thought, dedicated to Maussian perspectives on consumption and circulation (Caillé, et al. 2014). The growing presence of scholars from Brazil at the CCT conferences suggests that an emergent southern pole of theory and practice will soon emerge. And we begin to see the possibilities of African and Middle Eastern perspectives emerging as well.

### **Reinspiration**

Our original text referred to consumer culture theory, and did so for the very specific reason of moving towards recognition of the articulating role of consumption in later capitalist market mediated societies, and further towards insistence upon the globalizing, but also the simultaneously particularizing and reflexive localizing dimensions of this consumer culture. Our 2005 conceptualization built upon Don Slater’s definition (1997, 8) of consumer culture as a social arrangement in which the relations between lived culture and social resources, and between meaningful ways of life and the symbolic and material resources on which they depend,

are mediated through markets. We further emphasized the importance of market-made commodities, market-mediated social relationships and identity projects, and desire-inducing marketing symbols in the socio-cultural and ideological operations of consumer culture. And consumer culture also encompasses an interconnected system of commercially produced images, texts, and objects that groups use—through the construction of overlapping and even conflicting practices, identities, and meanings—to make collective sense of their environments and to orient their members' experiences and lives. Thus, the conception of consumer culture offered in the original text is already well adapted to accommodating the networked or politicized conceptions of consumption phenomena delineated above, and offers a dramatic contrast to the universalizing and bio-reductionist theories of consumption promulgated in the econometric, neuro- and evolutionary psychological models that fascinate large sectors of the marketing academy (Schneider and Woolgar 2012).

However, the centrality that CCT research generally attributes to the market, and its fundamental role in mediating social relationships and personal and collective identity projects has itself become a topic of theoretical debate. In particular, several prominent theorists suggest that the emergence of alternative, cooperative, and non-accumulative exchange systems—time banks, barter-based local economies, etc.—and ever proliferating platforms for peer-to-peer resource sharing are evidence of cracks in the marketplace apparatus, opening the prospect for non-marketized social relationships (Belk 2010; Graeber 2011; Schor 2011). While we applaud these efforts to theorize beyond the ideological realm of consumerism (and its historically contingent properties and constraints), we also caution that the temptation to view the “market” as being at odds with more noble, more humanistic, and more communitarian aims itself can betray a kind of romanticism that impeded analyses of the institutional shaping of human actions.

In closing we suggest that the market has been and remains a fundamental agent of structuration and source of resources for social mobilization (see for example, Breen 2004; Mintz 1986). A point to not be overlooked, is that in the current historical milieu, new social movements which seek to resist the marketization of everyday life—and often neo-liberal governmentalities—mobilize through the circulation of market mediated resources. So in midst of these new theoretical developments and research trajectories emanating from post-humanist networked models of consumption processes that recognize a more prominent role for the material; politically engaged theory and practice; new regional configurations, we believe that the theoretical pairing of commerce and culture remains a key component of consumer culture theoretics and distinctive contributions to the broader interdisciplinary conversation concerning consumption and society.

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