

# Toward a Theory of Status Consumption in Less Industrialized Countries

TUBA ÜSTÜNER  
DOUGLAS B. HOLT

How does status consumption operate among the middle classes in less industrialized countries (LICs)—those classes that have the spending power to participate effectively in consumer culture? Globalization research suggests that Bourdieu's status consumption model, based upon Western research, does not provide an adequate explanation. And what we call the global trickle-down model, often invoked to explain LIC status consumption, is even more imprecise. We study the status consumption strategies of upper-middle-class Turkish women in order to revise three of Bourdieu's most important concepts—cultural capital, habitus, and consumption field—to propose a theory specific to the LIC context. We demonstrate that cultural capital is organized around orthodox practice of the Western Lifestyle myth, that cultural capital is deterritorialized and so accrues through distant textbook-like learning rather than via the habitus, and that the class faction with lower cultural capital indigenizes the consumption field to sustain a national social hierarchy.

Understanding the mechanics and social consequences of consumption used to express social class position—which, following popular convention, we term *status consumption*—has long been the center of a rich theoretical debate (Bourdieu 1984; Lamont 1992; Simmel 1904/1957; Veblen 1899/1970). We argue that this research stream has a crucial limitation: key empirical studies have focused on consumption patterns in Europe and the United States to formulate a nomothetic theory that is posited to be universal, including application to less industrialized countries (LICs). Consumer culture theory demonstrates that a contextual approach to theory development often leads to more precise and powerful explanations (Arnould and Thompson 2005; for examples, see Arnould 1989; Holt 1998; Üstüner and Holt 2007). And research on cultural globalization has alerted us to the distinctive characteristics of consumption in LICs. So it is unlikely that a Western model of status

consumption is adequate for LICs. Thus, our aim in this study is to pursue a contextual theory of status consumption in LICs—analyzing the particular characteristics of status consumption that are distinctive compared to theory grounded in American and European consumption research—in order to build a more accurate and precise theory.

Understanding how status consumption works in LICs is particularly consequential today given the rapid emergence of a “new consumer” class in these countries—estimated at over 1.2 billion people, bigger than the West already, and expanding much more rapidly (Myers and Kent 2004). This emergent global class has discretionary purchasing power approaching Western levels and so they are able to pursue a consumption-focused lifestyle. These new consumers have recently become the most prized target of multinational companies, as they seek growth opportunities beyond saturated Western markets. These new consumers also pose a crucial challenge in the global struggle to manage climate change. To the extent that the new consumers identify with and seek to emulate the carbon-intensive Western lifestyle, the challenge of addressing global warming becomes that much harder.

In this study, we advance a theory that is tailored to explain the particular mechanics of status consumption among this “new class” in LICs. We examine the status consumption strategies of exemplary LIC new consumers—upper-middle-class women in Turkey. We leverage insights from the cultural globalization literature to revise three key constructs in Bourdieuan status consumption theory—cultural capital, habitus, and social field—in order to

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Tuba Üstüner is assistant professor of marketing at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80523 (tuba.ustuner@business.colostate.edu). Douglas B. Holt is the L'Oreal Professor of Marketing at the Said Business School at the University of Oxford, Park End Street, Oxford OX1 1HP (doug.holt@sbs.ox.ac.uk). The authors thank Şerife Geniş, Barış Gümüştawes, Yıldırım Şentürk, Janet Borgerson, Jonathan Schroeder, and the participants of Exeter Business School's research day for their useful comments. The Cass Business School provided research funding to the first author to complete this study.

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accurately account for our data. This revision constitutes a first step toward building a theory of status consumption specific to LICs.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Extending Bourdieu

Status consumption theory was initiated by Thorsten Veblen (1899/1970) and Georg Simmel (1904/1957), who jointly developed what is commonly termed *trickle-down theory*. Veblen's satirical treatment of conspicuous consumption showed how the wealthy rely on a variety of expensive goods and services as pecuniary symbols. Simmel added to this notion the idea that the desire for these status symbols trickle down the class hierarchy as each class seeks to emulate the class above. In the past 25 years, Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) has revitalized status consumption research with a more nuanced multidimensional model. Bourdieu's theory relies on the adaptation of three key constructs—cultural capital, habitus, and social field—culled from his broader efforts to advance a new social theory. While Bourdieu's model has generated powerful insights and has stimulated hundreds of articles, the theory's robustness has always been assumed rather than demonstrated. Empirical research has focused on people living in the richest and most powerful industrialized countries of Europe and North America (e.g., Holt 1998; Lamont 1992) while ignoring how status consumption operates among those living in LICs. So our goal is to revise Bourdieu's theory to explain this important context.

### Beyond the Global Trickle-Down Model

For many social scientists studying consumption in LICs, the inescapable observation that there is great demand for Western products as status symbols has led them to invoke a theory—what we call the global trickle-down model—that largely ignores Bourdieu's conceptual innovations. Global trickle-down takes the foundational idea of class emulation from Simmel and Veblen and expands it to a global scale. Rather than assume a national class structure in which we would expect LIC new consumers to emulate the upper class of their countries, what is novel about global trickle-down is that it operates according to a global social class structure (see Holt, Quelch, and Taylor 2004). LIC consumers emulate middle-class consumers of the West, whom they view as the most relevant status group above them. So in this model Western goods operate as powerful global status symbols that citizens of LICs deeply desire and pursue. When they earn enough discretionary income to participate effectively in consumer society, they seek out the same goods as in the West to signify that they have arrived, that they are peers to their Western brethren.

This prototheory received initial credibility as an anchor in Rostow's (1960) modernization theory and since then has become central to a range of influential books. For instance, global trickle-down undergirds economic sociologist Leslie

Sklair's (1995) treatment of global consumerism, political scientist Benjamin Barber's influential book *Jihad vs. McWorld* (1995), and global sociologists who have developed a critical approach to American consumer culture (Kit-wai Ma 2001; Tomlinson 1999).

Some cultural globalization research, which we review below, also invokes global trickle-down assumptions: O'Dougherty's (2002) study of the Brazilian middle class in Sao Paulo describes how American goods and leisure (e.g., trips to Miami and Disney World) occupy a central role as status symbols. Belk (2000) argues that the new black elite in Zimbabwe draw upon the status symbols of the highest echelons the middle class of the United Kingdom and the United States. Chaudhuri and Majumdar (2006) have recently proposed an explicit rendition of global trickle-down, noting that as the Indian economy liberalized and the mass media exploded in the 1990s, a symbolism-dominated consumerism oriented around the intensive pursuit of Western possessions became dominant. They also note that new forms of cultural capital seemed to be appearing as well and call for a context-specific theory of both trickle-down and cultural capital in LICs, a charge that our study seeks to answer.

The global trickle-down model corrects the most glaring weakness in Bourdieu's theory when applied to LICs: instead of theorizing the consumption field to be bounded by single countries, the model properly places status consumption in a global context. Yet, in so doing, the result is a model that is blunt and simplistic. In particular, global trickle-down assumes that everyone within an LIC competes using the same strategy, ignoring Bourdieu's insight that different class factions use different status consumption strategies that align with the composition of their economic and cultural capital. And the single strategy invoked—acquiring Western status goods—ignores the centrality of consumption practice in conveying status (Bourdieu 1984; Holt 1998). We begin with global trickle-down's basic insight—the globalization of the consumption field. And then we seek to improve upon this theory by adapting Bourdieu's key concepts to the LIC context.

### Leveraging Cultural Globalization Research

Cultural globalization research includes a substantial literature on consumption in LIC countries such as Russia (Oushakine 2000; Patico 2005), China (Fleischer 2007; Watson 1997), Georgia (Manning and Uplisashvili 2007), India (Mazzarella 2003), Niger (Arnould 1989), Trinidad (Miller 1997, 1998), Belize (Wilk 2006), and Turkey (Öncü 1997; Üstüner and Holt 2007). This literature focuses on research questions that differ from our focus on theorizing the mechanics of status consumption within LICs. Studies that reference status consumption generally focus on periodizing the onset of Western influence on status consumption, rather than examining the particular mechanics of status competition within the LIC (e.g., Ayata 2002; Mazzarella 2003; Patico 2005). Nonetheless, we were able to glean three im-

portant insights from this literature that sensitized our analysis to follow.

*Western Lifestyle as Myth.* Whereas the global trickle-down model assumes a literal emulation of Western goods, lifestyle, and practices from the North to the South, cultural globalization research demonstrates that the Western lifestyle is a myth constructed within the national discourse of the LIC. Friedman (1994) describes how a fantastically exaggerated and performative conception of Parisian haute couture forms the cultural epicenter for the status consumption of the young flaneurs performing “la sape” in urban clubs in the Congo. Arnould (1989, 259) describes how “adopting the imagined trappings of the Western consumer, the [elite] Nigerian seeks to enter the community of the supranational elite, if only temporarily or only in his or her imagination.” Öncü (1997) analyzes the mythic construction of idealized Western home among upper-class Turks, and Üstüner and Holt (2007) demonstrate that the Western Lifestyle myth, central to the construction of Turkish upper-middle-class status, is taken up by peasants living in urban squatter neighborhoods.

*The Political Economy of Global Consumption.* Whereas the global trickle-down model leaves the social forces constructing the global hierarchy untheorized, the cultural globalization literature has adapted global systems theory to demonstrate that local LIC consumption patterns evolve in a dialectic with a country’s structural position in the global sociopolitical system (Arnould 1989; Üstüner and Holt 2007). In particular, Wilk (2006; see also Ekholm-Friedman and Friedman 1995) documents the surprising ways in which globalization forces have shaped the construction of a Belizean cuisine since the seventeenth century. In so doing, he takes on the conventional notion—that globalization is a new force that is in tension with local culture—found in much globalization research. Instead, Wilk argues that global forces are central in the construction of the local. He shows how four different modes of globalization have led to four different constructions of local Belizean culture, with the status value of foreign foods shifting each time. Whereas the Belizean upper class once consciously mimicked foreign foods, cuisines, and manners to convey that one is “high class, modern, and civilized” (Wilk 2006, 22), with the “invention” of a Belizean cuisine, these same foreign foods were repurposed as status expressions within meals that were now constructed as Belizean. Wilk’s research shows that the construction of local vs. global consumption fields is dynamic, shifting historically. We develop a complementary perspective, examining how the construction of the field plays out across class factions at a single historical moment.

*Indigenizing the West.* Cultural globalization research focuses on how people in LICs engage Western consumer culture (e.g., Belk 1988; Caldwell 2004; Friedman 1994; Ger and Belk 1996; Hannerz 1996; Howes 1995; Liebes and Katz 1994; Miller 1997; Watson 1997). This research

focuses on the ideological effects of the global spread of Western, often American, consumer culture, with the Western commodity/text that has entered a particular LIC as the unit of analysis (e.g., Coca-Cola, hams, McDonalds, *Dallas*). The dominant research problematic is to ascertain whether locals consume these goods are “as is” (i.e., accepting the Western ideologies and practices embedded in the goods and consuming them in a manner similar to the West), or do they articulate them with local ideologies and practices?

In Miller’s (1998) study of Coca-Cola in Trinidad, he shows that Coca-Cola is nothing like the omnipotent colonizing global brand often portrayed. Rather, he shows how the brand has been indigenized through intersections with Trinidadian notions of sweet drinks, the particular historical trajectory of Coca-Cola entry into Trinidad, the mundane actions of local bottlers, and the social uses of Coca-Cola as a solvent for identity contradictions within Trinidad’s complex ethnic landscape.

These studies exemplify a large literature that provides consistent evidence for a range of localizing processes, acted upon and in response to Western consumer culture, that we call *indigenization*. Commodities originating in the West are routinely subjected to collective reinterpretation and adaptation of use to make them locally meaningful. Other synonyms frequently used to capture this idea include creolization, syncretization, domestication, and “glocalization.” This literature hints that indigenization processes are likely to be at work in some way in LIC status consumption.

Our analysis has benefited significantly from these three insights. However, when evaluated through the lens of status consumption research, this literature is quite limited. Status consumption theory is now a very large and mature research stream with hundreds of papers published in sociology, as well as a number of interdisciplinary journals such as *Poetics*, the *Journal of Consumer Culture*, and the *Journal of Cultural Economy*. Status consumption theory has been the subject of a number of books (e.g., Schor 1998; Warde and Martens 2000), edited collections (e.g., Bennett et al. 2009), and special issues edited by leading sociologists (e.g., Warde 2008). This mature research stream has coalesced around the basic requirements for contributing to status consumption theory, which include: engaging current theory (dominated by Bourdieu’s theory, as well as the omnivore hypothesis in the West), studying status consumption strategies comparatively across class factions, properly theorizing and operationalizing these social class factions, and focusing data collection and analysis on those aspects of consumption used to convey social class position (not all consumption). We have yet to find a study in the cultural globalization literature that provides a systematic empirical analysis of status consumption within an LIC, nor a study that explicitly engages and seeks to advance current status consumption theory. Therefore, our study contributes back to this literature by providing a first effort to import a sociological status consumption approach to unpack how status consumption operates within LICs.

## CONTEXT AND METHOD

We are interested in theorizing how LIC status consumption operates among those social classes that have purchasing power sufficient to participate effectively in consumer culture. Countries with a critical mass of such consumers constitute the semiperiphery in world systems theory terminology (Arrighi 1985; Gereffi and Evans 1981)—those countries that have moved up the global value chain beyond resource extraction and agriculture to include some industrial production and assembly. In the most impoverished countries of the periphery, only the nation's elites are new consumers, making up a tiny fraction, usually less than 1% of the population. But in the countries that make up the semiperiphery, the population with incomes that allow substantial participation in consumer culture is much larger. In the last two decades, an extraordinary surge of new consumers have emerged in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Russia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, China, India, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Indonesia (see Myers and Kent 2004 for a complete list). Excepting a handful of oil-producing countries, these countries have moved up the global value chain beyond resource extraction to include value-added industrial production. As a result, they have a much larger percentage of small business owners, professionals, and managers who have substantial discretionary incomes compared to the countries of the periphery. The vast majority of new consumers live in these semiperiphery countries. Given the more complex social class structure found in these countries compared to the periphery, we would likely find that status consumption strategies differ as well. So we shall narrow our focus to the new consumer class of the semiperiphery.

From a theoretical vantage point, what makes status consumption among these LIC classes distinctive compared to the Western societies is the influence of global power relationships. In both sociology (e.g., Portes, Castells, and Benton 1989; Wallerstein 1974) and economic anthropology (e.g., Mintz 1985; Ong 1999; Wolf 1982/1997), scholars have detailed how the core nation-states structure production and labor in the semiperiphery. Because the West, and particularly the United States since World War II, has dominated these countries economically, politically, and culturally (Escobar 1995; Krasner 1985), these power relationships influence the structure of the consumption field. As we detail above, the cultural globalization literature has demonstrated persuasively the tremendous cultural power of the West in a wide range of LICs. We want to extend this perspective to examine how the West's global cultural power reshapes how status consumption operates within semiperiphery LICs.

Initially, the Western development discourse was centered around production. Western governments insisted that LICs must follow an evolutionary path up the production value chain to develop economically toward the Western ideal (Rostow 1960). Meanwhile, anticolonial nationalist movements in LICs repurposed the West's rational, scientific ap-

proach to production to argue for local economic control via policies such as import substitution.

The neoliberal era, from the 1980s onward, brought the removal of trade barriers and the influx of Western companies, media, and brands into the LICs. These economic shifts included the unprecedented growth in consumer industries and entertainment media, the development of the retail and advertising sectors, and the vast proliferation of Western goods and images that had previously been shut out of these countries. Consumer culture in the developing world followed suit: "the West" soon came to be reframed in terms of the "good life" to be had through consumerism. Today, at the center of this discourse sits the American "way of life," the lifestyle imagined to exist in the nation with the greatest material abundance and the most unabashed celebration of consumerism. LICs that once embraced the productionist ideology, such as India, Brazil, and Turkey, have increasingly focused on consumption as the dominant index of modernity (Mankekar 1999; O'Dougherty 2002; Öncü 1997).

We have selected Turkey for our study. Turkey has had a lengthy engagement with the West across economic, political, and cultural fronts, and so Turkish consumer culture is deeply embedded in these historic center-periphery relationships (Emrence 2008). Mustafa Kemal sought to institutionalize Western cultural norms with the establishment of the new Turkish Republic in 1923. In the Cold War era, the West—particularly the United States—played a dominant political and economic role in Turkey. However, there was little cultural influence because, like many other LICs, Turkey maintained a closed economy focused on import substitution (Keyder 1997). As Cold War tensions declined and neoliberal policies opened up markets in the 1980s, Western influence shifted decisively to the cultural domain. With the election of Prime Minister Turgut Özal—a politician deeply impressed by American culture—the United States became the focal cultural reference for Turkish society (Balı 2002, 18.) Newly opened markets allowed in American television programs and American advertising agencies began promoting American consumer brands. The Turkish media hopped on board and together created a new discourse that equated the good life with the ability to consume in an American style. Frequent travel to the United States, dressing up in fashionable brands, eating international cuisine, taking a coffee break at the new fashionable cafés, pausing for an after-work drink at the stylish bars of five-star hotels, carrying a cell phone, joining American-style sports clubs, and living in gated communities were some of the requirements of this new good life that had become institutionalized by the late 1990s (Balı 2002; Kozanoğlu 1992).

We study women from what standard sociological class typologies would label the "upper-middle economic class" because this class represents Turkey's most important population of "new consumers" (Myers and Kent 2004), since they have incomes substantial enough to participate effectively in Western-style status consumption. These women come from households where the breadwinners are profes-

**TABLE 1**  
INFORMANT DEMOGRAPHICS SORTED BY STATUS CONSUMPTION STRATEGY

Name (age)	Father's education	Father's occupation	Education	Occupation	Cultural capital
<b>LCC strategy:</b>					
Aysen (37)	High school	Merchant	High school	Homemaker	6.7
Sevda (33)	AA (military)	Military	High school	Homemaker	7.2
Canan (41)	AA (Health)	Healthcare	BA	Homemaker	9.7
Irmak (40)	AA	Middle manager	High school	Homemaker	7.7
Habibe (39)	High school	Merchant	High school	Homemaker	6.7
Yelda (42)	High school	Musician	BA	Homemaker	10.2
Aysu (45)	High school	Teacher	BSc	Homemaker	9.7
Serap (45)	High school	Merchant	High school	Homemaker	6.7
Dilek (44)	AA (military)	Pilot	High school	Homemaker	8.2
Zehra (31)	High school	Merchant	BA	Homemaker	8.7
Aliye (41)	AA (military)	Pilot	Some college	Homemaker	9.2
Aynur (44)	BA	Private practice	High school	Homemaker	8.7
Nival (45)	AA (military)	Military	BA	Homemaker	9.2
Arzu (44)	AA	Merchant	High school	Homemaker	7.2
Handan (40)	Elite BA	Mayor	BA	Homemaker	11.7
<b>HCC strategy:</b>					
Sevil (41)	BA	Senior manager	Elite BA	Homemaker	12.7
Demre (38)	BSc	Business owner	BA	Homemaker	10.7
Birsen (38)	MD	Head surgeon	Elite BSc	Garment designer	14.0
Nesrin (45)	Elite BSc	Business owner	BA	High-level manager	11.5
Ceyda (42)	BSc	Business owner	BA (law)	Private practice	11.5
Idil (45)	MD	Anesthesiologist	BSc	Teacher	11.0
Figen (42)	BSc, MSc	Business owner	MD, MSc	Volunteer	12.0
Servet (42)	BSc	Senior manager	BSc, MSc	Private practice	11.5
Dilek (36)	BA (law)	Senior manager	Elite BA, MA, MSc	Lecturer	13.0
Deniz (35)	Elite BSc	Business owner	Elite BSc, MSc	Homemaker	13.7
Gaye (36)	BSc, MSc	Business owner	Elite BSc, MBA	Lecturer	13.0
Serap (39)	Elite BSc	Business owner	Elite BSc, MBA	Homemaker	13.7
Ferda (34)	MD	Business owner	Elite BA, MSc	High-level manager	13.0
Meryem (39)	BSc	Senior bureaucrat	Elite BA	Homemaker	12.7
Akcan (33)	BSc	Business owner	Elite BA	Cultural producer	14.0
Seray (33)	Some college	Business owner	BSc, MBA	Homemaker	11.2
Nevin (36)	Elite BA	Business owner	Elite BA, MA, PhD	Lecturer	13.5
Jale (35)	BA	Senior bureaucrat	Elite BSc, MSc	Lecturer	12.5
Ferma (38)	MSc (dentist)	Private practice	Elite BA	Lecturer	13.0
Bengisu (44)	AA (military)	Military	Elite BSc	Homemaker	11.2
Simgе (41)	Elite BSc	Senior manager	Elite BA, MA, PhD	Associate professor	14.5

NOTE.—LCC = lower cultural capital; HCC = higher cultural capital. Education ratings: 1 = high school or less; 2 = some college (AA); 3 = BA; 4 = master's/ some graduate school; 5 = PhD or elite BA (i.e., from a prestigious, selective college or university). Occupation ratings: 1 = unskilled or skilled manual labor; 2 = unskilled or skilled service/clerk; 3 = sales, low-level technical, low-level managerial; 4 = high-level technical, high-level managerial, and low cultural (e.g., primary/secondary teachers); 5 = cultural producers. Homemakers are rated at the average of all working women. Cultural capital rating = upbringing (father's education + occupation)/2 + education + occupation.

sionals, managers, government bureaucrats, or owners of medium-size businesses. Their incomes afford them a large home in an upscale neighborhood with at least two cars, and most have a summer house or time-share as well. We chose to limit the study to women simply because they provide the cleanest interpretation on how consumption and social class interact, as Turkish men remain somewhat committed to production-oriented notions of class (Ayata 2002). We chose women who were between 35 and 45 years old so that their adult statuses would be largely realized and to control for differences in life stage. In order to control for the influence of religiosity on their consumption, we sampled only those women who define themselves as secular and are against the public display of religious belief, such as the wearing of head scarves (Göle 1996; Navaro-Yashin 1999; Sandıkçı and Ger 2005). Within this population we

sought to recruit women who vary according to other key social class indicators, such as education and upbringing.

Following other studies conducted in non-Western settings (e.g., Thompson and Tambyah 1999), we used personal referrals to recruit informants. The first author (who conducted the interviews) recruited the first five participants through direct and indirect social ties. Then we used snowballing with multiple connectors to recruit additional informants. This recruiting strategy resulted in a sample of 36 women with diverse backgrounds apart from their common secular economic status (see table 1).

The interviewer was a fellow upper-middle-class Turkish woman, so informants generally felt at ease conversing about their consumption. She used a type of ethnographic interview, which has been termed an *identity interview*, to stimulate consumption stories that are particularly expres-

sive of the informants' identity projects (e.g., Holt and Thompson 2004). She pursued an inductive interviewing technique that bracketed out her tastes and cultural understandings and avoided framing questions. The interview was structured to elicit detailed discussion and stories around those consumption domains that the informant relied upon most assertively to convey status (i.e., the categories that she used to assert to the interviewer that her consumption was honorific and, likewise, that others were inferior). These status-expressive categories were highly patterned, with homes and neighborhood, interior decor, vacations, and fashion proving to be the most important. Mass media content proved to be less important as a status marker, perhaps because it is so widely available.

We used the hermeneutic method to interpret these data (Thompson, Pollio, and Locander 1994). For each participant, we interpreted the dominant strategy used to claim status, drawing from numerous triangulating examples in the data to achieve redundancy. Then we compared and contrasted these strategies across informants to search for patterns. We discovered two distinctive status consumption strategies that, without exception, dominated all of the interviews.

Since our primary goal was to revise Bourdieu's theory to more accurately explain LIC status consumption, we began by exploring whether Bourdieu's foundational idea—that social class factions are organized by their reliance on economic versus cultural capital in their status consumption—held up in our sample. So we examined whether the two strategies that we discovered in our interpretive analysis could be attributed to variation in cultural capital resources. We constructed a cultural capital scale (Holt 1998, 23; Lamont 1992) and used the scale to assign a rating for each informant (see table 1). We assigned homemakers the average rating for all of the working women so that their nonworking status would not skew the scale. Since all of one group consisted of homemakers while only seven of the other group were homemakers, we also examined whether there was any significant difference within the second group between working and nonworking women and found none.

All but one informant aligned with Bourdieu's high versus low cultural capital thesis. Given that economic capital, gender, ethnicity, life stage, and religiosity were held constant, we concluded that the two consumption strategies represent the dominant strategies used by two social class factions in Turkey, which differ in terms of cultural capital resources. So hereafter we will refer to the two groups as the HCC (higher cultural capital) and LCC (lower cultural capital) social class factions. Note that this procedure improves on Holt's (1998) approach, which conflated the effects of cultural and economic capital on status consumption patterns because he sampled on the dependent variable (i.e., cultural capital). Once we had confirmed that Bourdieu's class composition holds up in Turkey, we proceeded to analyze whether Bourdieu's constructs adequately describe the HCC and LCC strategies that we identified.

## LCCS: CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION IN AN INDIGENIZED FIELD

Informants in the LCC faction (LCCs) indigenize the consumption field to narrow the scope of social class competition to Turkey, bracketing out the rest of the world. Their status consumption strategy has two central dimensions: acquiring expensive goods that have been consecrated by Turkish tastemakers of the upper class and receiving public deference in luxury service encounters. LCCs consistently consume goods and services that serve as conspicuous signals of their pecuniary distance from Turks with fewer economic resources. They seek to emulate Istanbul high society and celebrities, whom they grant the power to define these status symbols, and then they do their best to acquire and display them. In other words, they pursue a trickle-down strategy, but the consumption field is local, not global.

*Home.* The home—its location, style, features, and decor—is central to consumer identity construction around the world and is particularly freighted with significance in the context of urban life in contemporary Turkey. Ankara housing was once organized in a stable class configuration: the various classes in the formal economy lived in city neighborhoods, the status of which varied predictably according to the status of occupants. The poor lived in squatter settlements on the city's periphery. This spatial organization fell apart in the 1980s, leading to a massive reconfiguration of social space that has begun to stabilize only recently. Squatters have encroached on city neighborhoods, and a new petit bourgeois class of migrant peasants have also found homes in the city.

Meanwhile, the government rezoned farmland well outside the city for development, and a frenzied housing development ensued, with large and expensive gated communities created so that the upper-middle class can escape the city (Ayata 2002). In the 1990s, Ankara's upper-middle classes moved en masse to these communities. A similar urban flight dynamic has occurred in Istanbul (Erder 1996; Öncü 1997). As a result, precisely how the upper-middle class constructs new lifestyles in these unfamiliar suburban spaces has been crucial to status expressions in Turkey (Ayata 2002; Geniş 2007; Öncü 1997).

For LCCs, these gated communities soon became a clear and concise signal of economic status. However, LCC women hesitated to make the move initially, particularly because many of these spaces have been configured for and are dominated by HCCs, as we will see in the next section. Canan, for instance, worried that she would be moving away from her LCC peers, who buttressed her status in the city. Even after 3 years living in one of the gated communities, she still feels misplaced, despite the fact that she lives in a big south-facing house on a corner lot that she insisted her husband buy. Despite these anxieties, LCCs value their new communities because they have found that they are surrounded by wealthy neighbors. For example, Serap describes how she was relieved upon learning about her neighbors in her new gated community:

I heard that really good people have houses there. Akin Pekmez, the owner of a renowned gas station, Ađalar Petrol. Also, the owners of the Babakebap. Babakebap—do you know of them? The kebab chain. They bought five houses there. And also an eye surgeon. I hope I will meet them soon.

For Serap, “good neighbor” implies wealthy people. She is not disturbed by the fact that one family bought five houses. For the HCCs described below, buying a group of houses in the same neighborhood is a sign of peasant tastes; it suggests living in clans, bringing food to one another, having loud family get-togethers with children running around. For Serap, the ability to buy five houses all at once is a sign of great wealth, and she is happy to have such neighbors.

*Interior Decor.* When it comes to home decor, LCCs are very attentive followers of what is in fashion in Turkey, relying heavily on elite tastemakers to guide their choices. For furnishings, the store of choice is Ismet Moble—the most expensive furniture store in Ankara. LCCs trust Ismet Moble to accurately reflect what the media and elites in Istanbul are designating as fashionable. LCCs expect mediators of elite tastes to guide their consumption, and they are proud of such connections. Several LCCs had their houses decorated by interior designers, whose names they dropped into conversation because it shows their ability to pay for such services. They make sure to mention if their interior decorator is someone famous, or related to someone famous, or had designed for a celebrity previously.

LCCs devote extraordinary effort to tracking and mimicking elite tastes. For a number of years, Aliye had loved classical furniture and antiques and had decorated her house with flowery wallpaper, matching carpets, and crimson shades; had furnished it with antique furniture, lion-foot coffee tables, and bronze sculptures; and had her home’s walls covered with hundreds of paintings by various Turkish artists. She explains that she had no prior interest in painting, and then art auctions became “fashionable . . . very popular . . . one was supposed to go to auctions. And then you continue going and you start liking it.” Aliye and her husband befriended dealers and eventually collected over 600 paintings.

But two years ago, they sold their entire collection, and moved to their new “minimalist” house, reflecting the new tastes of the Turkish elite. The classical furniture has entirely disappeared and Aliye now despises this style. In her 1,500 square foot living room, she has only one sofa, a dining table, and a coffee table. With the exception of a mirror there is nothing on the walls. Everything in the room is white: the walls, the floor and carpets, the mirror frame, the shades, a sofa, a table. While Aliye does not reveal what influenced her abrupt shift, at the time of the interview the Su Hotel near Antalya, which the media and celebrities made famous, was renowned for its all-white minimalist decor and had become a popular destination among her social circle.

While LCCs buy many Western-brand goods for their

homes, their Westernness rarely comes up in conversation. Rather they emphasize the cost and the popularity among Istanbul elites as a trickle-down status claim.

*Canan:* My lights are from *LampHouse*. What do they call these? *Swarovski* crystals. The name of the crystal nowadays is *Swarovski*. . . . Haven’t you heard of it? They have accessories as well, necklaces, earrings. Nowadays, they are all from *Swarovski* stones. It is today’s fashion. It is like crystal we know, but it is *Swarovski* now.

*Clothing.* Likewise, LCCs strongly favor the brands and styles celebrated in the mass media as favored by Istanbul elites as status symbols. LCCs were particularly attuned to two very popular celebrities, Hulya Avsar and Gulben Ergen, each of whom had their own TV show and woman’s magazine (named *Hulya* and *Gulbence*). Much like *Martha Stewart Living* and *O, The Oprah Magazine* in the United States, Hulya and Gulben used their magazines to rave about new styles of clothing and other lifestyle accessories, providing fashion directives for their readers. Dilek describes Hulya Avsar as her idol. She says, “I love her style, her looks, her stance on life.” Aynur on the other hand is a Gulben fan, whose recommendations she mixes and matches with other celebrity directives to create her own look: “I do not copy them exactly though. I copy one’s make up, the other’s top, another’s pants. Like that. I have my own style.”

LCCs pay close attention to Istanbul high society. For example, Handan says that her new favorite designer is a Turkish-Jewish accessory maker in Istanbul. When she realizes that I did not know the designer, she says, “Haven’t you heard of him? There were lots of stories on him in various newspapers. They say that the new ‘in’ thing among Istanbul society is Sevan.” Indeed Sevan Bicakci was a favorite of Istanbul society at the time. One of the richest women in Turkey, Guler Sabanci, the chairperson of the renowned Sabanci Holding, appeared in major newspapers wearing Bicakci’s rings. Likewise, Handan commissioned an Ankara carpenter to make copies of furniture owned by an elite Istanbul family, which had been showcased in a home decor magazine. This intensive quest to keep up with Turkish elites leads some LCCs to become extremely industrious and meticulous in tracking elite fashion:

*Arzu:* I regularly buy Alem [a Turkish celebrity gossip magazine]. I like to follow the celebrities and the society people. I am curious about what they wear, where they go, who they go out with. . . . I could easily tell you who had a Botox or who had an operation. I clip their pictures and file them.

*Interviewer:* File them?

*Arzu:* Yes. I have files of celebrities. I file their operations, the outfits and accessories. So I would know. If a celebrity says, “No, I did not have an operation,” I have the picture. I can compare before and after. I know who had what kind of operation and when. Same with outfits. I like to follow

the fashion. And when I start to see the same bag in more than one occasion, I make a note of that. I clip the picture of the bag and ask Tansu [her niece] to get me one when she goes to New York. Because when something becomes fashionable, it is really hard to buy it in Ankara. The stores just don't bring enough and sometimes one has to wait a couple of months to get the bag.

Arzu goes to extreme lengths to be an early adopter of a new elite fashion. The cultural pedigree of the bag is irrelevant. Rather, the bag's foreign sourcing makes it harder to get and, hence, more exclusive, establishing the signaling value of the good. Fashion items that are sanctioned by Turkish elites and are difficult to acquire in Ankara are particularly appealing, and so LCCs devote great efforts to acquire them. Before going to Milan, Serap had already made up her mind to buy an Italian shoe that she had seen in an upscale Turkish store. And as opposed to trying to see what different collections Milan has to offer, she spent half a day searching for the shoe. Still others have their travel agents design trips specifically for shopping, especially in Italy. For example, Aliye describes that a yearly shopping trip to Italy in which she and a group of her friends seek out what the Turkish elite media has deemed to be in fashion that year. In Aliye's terms, they shop for all the "required items for the year," such as the fruit-print Louis Vuitton bag. When I ask whether they would all buy the same bag, she says "Yes, everybody would have exactly the same bag that year. It actually feels like kind of a requirement. If you don't have it there must be something wrong with you. It is as if you cannot afford it, or something."

Handan uses her status as a frequent customer of a high-end garment shop in Ankara to ensure the scarcity of a bag she has purchased: "I am her special customer. If I buy something and if she has one more of it, I tell her to send the other to Istanbul. For example, I recently bought a 3.5 billion TL bag, and I did not want to see it on someone else in Ankara. So I asked her to send it to Istanbul and she did."

*Vacations.* LCCs perceive vacation destinations by the same calculus as they do furnishings and clothing: there are places that the Istanbul elites have designated as "must" places, and trips to these places are accumulated, ticked off as if using a scorecard. For instance, Canan and her husband recently stayed at an expensive boutique hotel in the mountains whose status value came from its celebrity guests: "It was beautiful. It was a place that was visited by Tarkan and Sezen Aksu [two very famous singers who live in Istanbul]."

LCCs place their trust in tour agents who have established their businesses around the needs of Ankara's upper-middle class to design their trips in accord with the dynamic standards of elite fashion. Tour agents plot out the destination, the hotel, and even the restaurants. LCCs consider the over-the-top service they demand from these agents to be part of what makes their mode of travel luxurious:

*Aliye:* Our car will be arranged. Our driver will be arranged. They would come to the airport and pick us up. The driver also is the guide. Whatever is required. The tour staff knows

Remzi [her husband] very well. The manager of Setur [the name of the tour agency] is a very close friend of mine. As he knows Remzi very well, he arranges everything for us. Wherever we are supposed to go, wherever they are serving the best food, what is to be eaten where, wherever is the most interesting. There is no need to do any research or to look at those guidebooks. We get it all prepared. Our international trips are very much fun. Why? Because we do not need to put any effort into it. They bring it all to you, in front of you. That is beautiful. They arrange everything.

All LCCs told us that they follow the tour operators' suggestions and have no interest in improvising or exploring on their own. They act as an audience, enjoying the spectacle prepared for them by the local tastemakers, in this case the travel agent. When asked to detail their favorite trips, they instead total up the number of times they have been to particular Western cities, counting as if it were a scorecard. Vacations are judged on their luxuriousness and on the "quality" (status) of fellow travelers. Yelda describes one of her recent trips:

Do you know Kadime Kadim? She is one of the high society people. They said that there would be a very crowded group coming from Istanbul. We flew from Ankara, and they from Istanbul. The name of the tour was Prenses. But you had to see the tour. Special gifts in every stop, cake and tea services, the buses with air conditioning and restrooms. We toured like the heads of the state. The tour was full with high society from Istanbul. [She names a few.] It was a very posh tour.

The sheer expense of these tours, affordable only to wealthier patrons, allows LCCs to distinguish themselves from the less-moneyed classes below them. Aynur described how she stopped going to an all-inclusive resort because they began accepting installment payments, and so "the quality of their patrons decreased" and "whoever wanted to go could go":

*Aynur:* In our time it was of very high quality. It was superb. There were all sorts of activities. It was luxurious, clean, and food was open buffet. Patrons were high quality people. They were more elite, more upper class. Because then it was not easy to go there. It was very expensive. The drinks were not included. So the extras cost a lot. In order to stay there, you had to be rich. You had to have money.

For Aynur and other LCCs, a high quality vacation is equated with wealthy people consuming an economically scarce experience, while low quality implies middle-class people and widespread availability.

Nival joined a "well-regarded time-share group." She decided to join because it "has very elite, very high quality clientele. Foreigners. And the Turkish clientele are all above a level, all industrialists, successful businessmen." Nival uses "foreigners" as an economic signal—shorthand for people of wealth. She has no interest in their particular tastes.

Yelda is also the member of the same time-share group and she decided to join because it is a "high-end" group



with “well-regarded members.” Yelda and her friends spend much of their time-share at the coastal resort of Bodrum rather than at the hundreds of other international locations. Yelda says that it is much more fun to go to Bodrum, as they can enjoy themselves much more “comfortably.” Similarly, Canan and her husband took a trip to Paris with another couple, completely arranged by an elite tourist agency as a private tour. A Turkish driver-guide picked them up at the airport in a Mercedes van and spent the next five days acting as their guide and chauffeur, taking them everywhere. Even though they were traveling in one of the world’s great food cities, they ate most of their dinners at Turkish restaurants. LCCs work hard to remain within the well-understood status game of Turkey. They find travel in the West to be disconcerting, just the opposite of HCC informants.

LCCs distinguish themselves from middle-class vacationers by criticizing their consumption practices. They view the middle-class as the “hungry poor” who “attempt to get their money’s worth till the last drop.” The middle-class people are said to fill their plates with food at the open buffet, and “eat from every single dish as if they were just finished a day of fasting.” They stay in the pool for hours as if “they were in the public bath.” Dilek contrasts this behavior with her family’s behavior: “We do not rush over all the food, we only put the things we want on our plate.” Aliye no longer patronizes a resort due to a similar incident:

Towards the end of their breakfast I realized that they were doing one last round at the open buffet, getting a couple of extra round breads and cheese. They were stuffing the bread with cheese, wrapping it with napkins and putting them in their bags. It was their lunch. Honestly these kinds of things seem completely inappropriate to me. So I complained to the management, told them they spoiled the resort with accepting them as guests.

Dilek and Aliye invoke their dislike for the “taste of necessity” noted by Bourdieu (1984), since their wealth allows them to emphasize quality over quantity.

LCCs evaluate tourism according to the luxury amenities that are provided, with the five-star resort hotel serving as the benchmark. Encouraged by their travel agent, Aliye and her husband recently started to patronize various boutique hotels in Turkey, invading tourism space that has been previously dominated by HCCs and foreign tourists. Aliye comments that most boutique hotels are very cute, clean, and nice, but that they lack air-conditioning. So whenever they go to a boutique hotel, Aliye and her husband bring their own window air-conditioner in their SUV. They have the hotel serviceman break one of the windows and install the air conditioner. When they check out, they pay for the window replacement. She says “I know it looks boorish from outside, but we just like to live that way. We want to have the best. We never limit ourselves when we travel.”

*Shopping: Local Deference as Conspicuous Consumption.* LCCs strongly prefer shopping locally to shop-

ping in the United States or Europe, unless they are escorted by a tour guide. For LCCs, shopping is an uneasy requirement of an international trip, one that makes them feel insecure. As none of the LCCs speak English, nor have any lived in the West for extended periods, the West is an alien place. So they often actively avoid interaction with Westerners. Some even refuse to shop when abroad for tourism. Yelda explains her decision: “We have all the same brands in Turkey anyway. And I am a good customer of those brands. So they let me know of early sales, and sometimes let me pay in installments if I want. I do not see any reason to shop from abroad. And sometimes they won’t have as beautiful stuff.”

When they shop on their own in the West, LCCs are treated just as ordinary customers, which greatly decreases the value of the experience. As they cannot communicate with the shop assistants, they do not receive any suggestions or personalized service, which is a crucial part of their shopping experience in Turkey. Receiving personal, exclusive service in Turkey is a critical class boundary signal for the LCCs, distinguishing them from the “masses.” For example, Aynur describes the type of service she demands:

I am a special customer. I am seriously special. Such that I would not try outfits in the store. I choose them and bring them home. I try them at home. The ones I like, I buy and the rest are sent back to the store. And then later they would bill me. It is unheard of that I ever try something on at the store. . . . I do the payments from home sometimes, they send an employee with a slip machine to home, and I do the payment at home. . . . Whenever I enter the store, everybody recognizes me. This is beautiful. I like that . . . I like the employees to be courteous to me. I like them say “Welcome Aynur Hanım [a term of respect in addressing woman].” The same holds for my hairdresser. Right after I enter the hairdresser’s shop, they bring my coffee. They definitely know it. I mean they know that as soon as I enter the shop that they need to bring my coffee and they do it. And I won’t ask for it, they feel it, and they understand it. So I guess it is very important to be recognized. . . . At Princess Hotel [a five-star hotel in Istanbul], the same. The moment I enter the hotel, everybody from the bellboy to the second floor employees, they all recognize me. “Hi Aynur Hanım and Ahmet Bey [her husband]. Welcome.” They even know Boncuk [her dog]. I really like that.

Most LCCs emphasized this sort of personal attention, indicating that being treated as a special customer is a key measure of social standing. With the exception of Aynur, all LCCs initially rejected the move to gated communities because they didn’t want to lose the constant deference they receive in the city. In the city, the social networks are dense enough that everyone knows if someone lives in a luxury flat and treats that person accordingly. Shop assistants and other service people, such as grocers and butchers, show more interest and provide more service and deference. For LCCs, their social distinction was easily ritualized in daily

life in the city as the entire service economy deferred to their economic position.

*Indigenizing the Consumption Field.* Cultural globalization research demonstrates that the West imposes upon LICs a globalized consumption field as an unintended consequence of its cultural, political, and economic dominance. HCCs, as we will see in the next section, are consummate players of this status game. What is particularly noteworthy about the LCC strategy, then, is that it brackets out these forces in order to limit status competition to the national consumption field. LCCs position themselves immediately below the Turkish upper class at the very top of the class hierarchy, using symbols of economic well-being as proof points. They view HCCs as peers because they have the same purchasing power and, to their mind, consume the same sort of status symbols. Since LCCs rarely interact socially with HCCs, they are seldom called to task on this assertion. However, occasional references reveal that LCCs have some awareness that the HCCs are critical of their tastes and manners. LCCs respond by arguing that HCCs are overly involved with the West and do not really understand the realities of Turkey, sometimes terming them “wannabe Americans.” Dilek, for example, describes an occasion where one of her “wannabe American” neighbors complained about noise while they were having a dinner party at her house:

I heard the neighbor’s daughter, an American-educated woman in her early thirties, comment. She shouted at me from her room saying “In America, when the clocks show eleven, everybody goes to bed.” I got so mad. I said “It is not America here, madam. It is Turkey.” And we had a very nasty argument.

HCC efforts to embrace the Western Lifestyle myth do not impress LCCs. They consider HCCs to be imposters, trying to be someone different than the person they really are. For example, Aliye explains that at one point she and her husband started to socialize with a group of “intellectual people, most of whom had lived in the West for extended periods of time.” She describes that they all dress up similarly, and look down on everybody else, always criticizing, making comparisons with the West. Similarly, Nilgun critiques the Western lifestyle based upon her travel experiences:

America was not at all interesting to me. I see it on the TV as well. When I see something I should say “Wow.” Nothing made me say “Wow” there. Honestly, after that [her trip to Los Angeles] my interest in international vacations had considerably decreased. To me, America is not something like “wow, what is this?” I would rather be sitting next to a waterfall and eat bread and kofte [a Turkish spiced burger]. It helps me relax much more. I love my country more. Way more. I mean I do not feel the urge to go somewhere else. . . . The food was disgusting. Disgusting. It is all whipped cream. One wants to vomit. Our stuffed koftes are so much

better. This is why [when Americans come to Turkey] they cannot stop eating at our five-star hotels’ open buffets. They just put the whipped cream and that is what they call a dessert. Disgusting. I did not like that.

Likewise, Aysen comments “If I had seen everywhere else in the world, then I might want to go there. Otherwise America is not that appealing to me.” And Irmak says, “When I think of America all I can think of is large big buildings. Definitely. . . . It is not so crucial for me to see the U.S. I can go visit there, or not. It does not matter. I do not think of America [as an important destination].”

When forced to compare their lives to the West, LCCs deploy a rhetorical strategy that selectively culls the most invidious comparisons. For example, according to Yelda:

Our living standard is much higher than that of the Europeans. England, for example—I am not counting the royals, of course. But compared to a normal, a standard family in England, our living standard is much higher. For example, they never believe that we live in houses like this [implying her house]. [My sister] was living in England. I went there. I had the pictures of my house with me. I showed them. They saw all the pictures of my house, the living room and other rooms. They could not believe it. They thought I was living in a palace. They asked whether I was a princess. I mean their reactions were unbelievable.

Similarly Aynur describes the houses in Cambridge (UK):

Cambridge was full of two- and three-story houses, like those in Beysukent, but not as beautiful. It definitely was not as beautiful as Beysukent. When you look from outside you think how would one live here. They were like small ramshackle huts. But when you enter inside it was not too bad. Their gardens were beautiful. But from outside they looked really ugly.

LCCs also make invidious comparisons praising the material conditions of Ankara compared to other European cities. Unlike HCCs, they view “civilization” in material terms. They note the disorderliness of the European cities, dirt and garbage on the streets, the homeless people, and the poor quality of hotels. Ankara’s standards are much better they argue. The underground system in Ankara is newer and was built using the latest technologies. Most LCCs note their disappointment upon arriving at their destination hotel in major European cities. They think that the branches of international hotels, such as Sheraton and Hilton, are much more beautiful and luxurious in Ankara compared with those in major European cities, where the rooms are very modest and crowded with old-looking furniture, the elevators are antiquated, and the service is mediocre. These observations make LCCs wonder why there is so much “hype about the West.”

LCCs indigenize their status consumption, effectively bracketing out foreign social class competition. LCCs insist that status is a strictly local competition, constructing a hi-

erarchy in which they consistently nudge the Western middle class out of the field. They emulate the Turkish upper class, whom they define as Turkish celebrities, Istanbul high society, and wealthy industrialists. The goods and brands that emanate from the West are valuable only to the extent that they have been consecrated as local status objects by the Turkish upper class. This consumption strategy allows them to imagine that they are approaching the same social standing as the upper class and, along the way, leaving the middle class far behind. At the same time, they also fend off the HCC Westernized conception of status, which we develop below. Because they rely solely on economic capital to construct their class position, LCCs construct HCCs as status peers, but insecure peers who are overly influenced by the West.

### HCCS: ORTHODOX PRACTICE OF THE WESTERN LIFESTYLE MYTH AS CULTURAL CAPITAL

Informants in the HCC faction (HCCs) deploy a very different status strategy than LCCs, one that emphasizes intensive knowledge and orthodox performance of the Western Lifestyle myth. HCCs rely upon the Western Lifestyle myth to assert their superiority over LCCs, very successfully in their view despite the continual inroads made by LCCs in buying the same commodities and services.

HCCs vigorously adopt the global consumption field imposed by the West. While LCCs largely ignore the Westernness of their consumption, for HCCs the Western provenance of their consumption is what gives it status value. HCC informants continually use terms referencing “Western lifestyle” (*yabancı*, meaning “foreigner,” and *yurtdışı*, meaning “abroad”) when they describe their consumption, variously referencing cultural practices, goods, signs, and tastes. This is a collective discourse constructed by and circulating among Turkish HCCs, distilling a stylized construction of idyllic consumer life in the West in a manner that is socially functional for this faction. Hence, we adapt the modern conception of myth (Barthes 1972; Slotkin 1998), which references historical narratives that are consecrated by elites because they serve a functional role in the reproduction of the nation and class positions therein. In this case, the cultural material that is imported and reworked to form the myth is less historical than global—a key aspect of the global cultural flow that Arjun Appadurai (1996) calls the “mediascape.” The Western Lifestyle myth primarily idealizes American suburban middle-class life, while sometimes also incorporating European markers of the Western lifestyle, such as skiing in the French Alps. The Western Lifestyle myth organizes the accumulation and expression of cultural capital for HCCs.

*Home.* Seventeen of 21 HCCs live in gated communities. They moved to these enclaves to fulfill their Westernized vision of “the good life” with two children, two cars, and, in most cases, a dog. They are all very clear about which gated communities offered the proper medium to pur-

sue this dream. Among hundreds of gated communities in Ankara, only four (Angora, Beysukent, Bilkent, Mesa) meet the HCCs’ selection criteria. Three of these four suburban enclaves are appealing because they offer the closest replica of what all informants define as “the American style of living.” In these communities, one generally finds row upon row of houses or apartment buildings that are identical in design and color, perfectly groomed lawns, and streets without a single piece of litter.

Seray and her husband long dreamed of moving to the United States, as her husband had studied for a master’s degree there. After marrying, the only place that they considered buying a house was Mesa. Seray emphasizes the community’s key features: its setting, car parks, walk paths, green spaces, orderly environment, and careful maintenance. She is particularly concerned about the kind of people who are her neighbors: according to Seray they are all university educated, working or stay-at-home mothers, and most important, share her zeal for living “the American lifestyle.”

Gaye and her family recently moved to a new house in Bilkent. She feels that they “had” to move because the location of their former house was not as beautiful, harmonious, and peaceful as Bilkent. “Bilkent offered what our neighborhood was lacking,” she comments. “It offered American-style living.”

*Interviewer:* Can you explain what you mean by American-style living?

*Gaye:* Where the environment is well taken care of. . . . [In the city] the surroundings are dirty, not beautiful, there is no security, there would be no speed bumps on the roads. Nobody would take care of the snow. All cars would have ten centimeters of snow on them. When I say American-style living what I mean is that the surroundings are much more sensitive and considerate to the children, a well-groomed surrounding, a more secure space, houses built in a larger space, houses that look alike, not a mix of colors but a harmonious neighborhood.

The Western Lifestyle myth consists of both a particular aesthetic as well as a particular ethos that is manifested in consumption practices. In terms of aesthetics, HCCs consistently contrast their “orderly, planned, organized, clean” gated communities with the “chaotic, disorderly, mixed up, dirty” neighborhoods of the city. They find the random house styles, colors, and integration of local businesses in the cities to be aesthetically unbearable. They all define the homogeneous and controlled environment of the gated communities as beautiful, and find the sameness of the houses to be harmonious. With the green spaces for walking and running, and with day-care units, primary schools, and close-by malls, gated communities are entirely self-contained social spaces. With playgrounds and speed bumps on the roads, this is a child-friendly world. And with its abundant parking lots, twenty-four hour maintenance service, and security at the entrance, these communities are secure, controlled, stress-free environments.

This aesthetic appreciation is reflected not only in their selection of particular gated communities over apartments in the city, but also in their yards and interior decor choices. All of the HCCs' houses have lawns without any flower gardens. Lawns are preferred to gardens because they are orderly and they soothe the eye. Perfect lawns are a serious aesthetic concern for most. For example, after their front yard was planted with an imported carpet-like lawn, Ferda's husband spotted a slight unevenness in the yard. As they could not stand the imperfection, they had all the grass pulled up, had more soil put on the yard, and only after making sure that it was perfectly leveled, they had another new lawn of sod installed.

In house decor, harmony and order are achieved by carefully matching the colors and styles of furniture. Sofas, shades, the dining table, chairs, and carpets are carefully selected to match with one another. All HCCs have modern, casual Italian, or American-style furniture. And almost all of them have two matching sofas or an L-shaped single large sofa. The colors are very similar in all houses—neutral beige, brown or gray tones. With the exception of two informants, none like classical or antique furniture, which they find to be unsanitary.

To properly enjoy the Western lifestyle also requires constant application of a particular moral order. The well-educated and "cultivated" residents of gated communities must use the right manners and sensibilities towards one another and toward their shared living space in order to create a "civilized" social environment. For example, Ferda and husband decided to move to Mesa only two years after purchasing a flat in a newly built apartment in Çankaya—an equally posh neighborhood. They did so because they had "enough of their neighbors in their first house." The neighbors were leaving their shoes in front of their entrance door, talking loudly at the corridors with one another, shouting to their children, and carrying "smelly" food at the elevators. According to Ferma "they were basically peasants." Ferma and her husband moved to Mesa to protect themselves from the risk of having to share their living environment with these peasant-like people. They knew Mesa "appealed to only particular kind of people." Similarly Jale points out that they moved to Bilkent because it is an "elite environment" with a tightly controlled space and self-enforced social norms, so it won't become "déclassé like other neighborhoods in the city." Jale defines elites as people who are well-mannered and more conscious of their environment and who don't have simple tastes, who are not just rich but also well educated.

HCCs perceive gated communities as cultural oases, where they can enact the aesthetic and moral order they deem the "American style of living," allowing them to imagine that they are sharing the same life as the Western middle class. However, LCCs have the money to buy into these communities, and don't share the HCC interest in sustaining a homogeneous expression of the Western Lifestyle myth. HCCs deride them as "new rich" who have money but no taste or manners.

Several years ago Deniz and her husband bought a house in Angora, but at the last minute they decided not to move in and instead rented another house on a different street because they discovered that an LCC (an "Easterner") lived in the attached house next to them. Deniz found the "trophy wife," the airing of carpets on the balconies, and their loud talk to be unbearable: "When you have neighbors like that you cannot live comfortably in your house. . . . I mean, she has not gotten rid of her previous culture, and is trying to put the new money on top of it." Similarly, Meryem who recently moved to a new high-end gated community, describes how upset she is with her new neighbors who "do not share my sensibilities" despite having the same economic status: "this is a lifestyle, it is a matter of culture, comes from the childhood, from the family. Money is not everything. If I knew that these kinds of people lived here, I would not have bought this house." Likewise, Dalik reveals that she feels uncomfortable in her new gated community, commenting "Those kinds of people, the kinds of people who had only recently became rich. They are people who wear turbans, there are people who drive Mercedes, and those with 'large moustaches' . . . I feel like there is nobody closer to my social circle."

What bothers Meryem, Deniz, Jale, Ferma, and other HCCs so much is that in terms of what they own, there is no longer much difference between themselves and the LCCs. They share the same living environment, live in similar houses, drive similar cars, shop from the same shops, and their children go to similar schools. Yet according to the HCCs they do not belong to the same social class. The HCCs claim superiority by discursively positioning LCCs as the "new rich" who lack the "proper" manners, knowledge, and sensibilities. Almost all HCCs use similar examples to describe LCC manners: they leave their shoes outside the entrance, step back on their shoes, air the carpets in their balconies, and carry foul-smelling food into the apartment. They are loud, their children have no supervision, and they do not know to greet people in public spaces. And this is no coincidence. These examples are considered to be the manners of the lowest strata in Turkey (Öncü 1999). Only the uneducated peasants would not know how to greet or engage in a small daily chat with a woman. Only those who live in squatters or peasants leave their shoes outside of their houses. By using these highly charged symbols of class-based consumption practices to describe their neighbors' manners, the HCCs establish their higher social standing as compared with their LCC neighbors.

*Vacations and Shopping.* Apart from home ownership, foreign travel is the HCCs' most status-expressive activity. They frequently travel to the West. All informants had taken multiple trips to the United States and Europe, and many had made extended stays in the West for higher education and occasionally for work. HCCs construe these trips as learning experiences where the goal is to gain maximum exposure to Western tastes, goods, and sensibilities. Initially the primary purpose of trips to the West was to hunt for the most authentic Western goods and brands. How-

ever, with the recent increased flow of Western goods into Turkey, HCCs are intent upon studying Western tastes and consumption practices so that they can enact them back home to claim new distinctions. We describe these two phases.

According to HCCs, in early 1990s the variety of Western goods and brands available in Ankara was limited. And often the introduction of new brands or the selection of collections was constrained by local tastemakers. Turkish retailers, women's magazine editors, and celebrities determined how Turkish women were supposed to dress up and decorate their homes and which accessories to use. Bypassing these local tastemakers' assertions, HCCs used trips to the West to gain first-hand knowledge about different types of goods and brands, how they are to be used, and in what ensemble. By hunting for goods not available in Turkey, they claimed a stronger connection to the West. This strategy manifested itself most potently when HCCs hit a change in life-stage that required buying new products, such as getting married or having a baby. Most of them traveled to the West to stock up on goods that were distinctly expressive of the Western Lifestyle myth. On their honeymoon Deniz and her husband spent 7 days in the United States, mostly at the malls: "We were starting the day in the mall at nine or ten in the morning and were leaving at around nine or ten in the evening." The highlight of her honeymoon trip was stocking up on household goods that weren't distributed locally: from a flower-print pastel-colored set of matching towels, waste bin, and bathroom mat, to garlic presses and pizza cutters. She was hunting for things that, though "we were likely not to use much," were "the things that we found original." Likewise, Jale and her husband spent 5 days shopping in London when she was 6 months pregnant, buying various outfits for the baby, a high-end baby buggy for joggers, and other baby relevant decor and goods that were not then available in Turkey. Similarly, Akcan went to the United States right after her honeymoon, buying nearly all of their household items for their new home, including silverware, towels, mattress covers, and floor mats. They had to pay for 150 kilograms of excess baggage on the flight back to Ankara.

Recently, HCCs have found that this strategy—finding what they and their peers have deemed the most "original" Western lifestyle goods and bringing them back to Turkey—is no longer sufficient to claim an authentic unmediated connection to the Western lifestyle. With the liberalization of both imports and Western media, the range of Western goods available in Turkey has vastly expanded, and the speed of diffusion of new styles and tastes is much more accelerated. What were once "original" Western goods have now entered the circuit of local status consumption inhabited by LCCs, causing an inflation in standards of Western authenticity. As a result, the HCCs have reframed how an authentic connection to the West is formed, and, likewise, have changed their consumption strategy. Simply buying Western goods is no longer enough. They now claim that authentic consumption requires understanding and enacting

the tastes and consumption practices of the Western middle class.

HCCs pick up on this valuable information on their trips by walking the streets and hanging out in public spaces. They note public manners and styles of interaction. For example, informants referenced normative behaviors at the cafés, or the ways in which a family with young kids were interacting with one another, or how Western fathers were so involved with their kids, pushing their strollers on the streets, calming the kids down when they cry. And they pay attention to how Westerners decorate and landscape their homes.

In recent years, many HCCs began taking ski trips in the Alps, allowing them to enact their Westernness and then tell stories about it back home. Last year Gaye rented a house in the French Alps and learned how to snowboard. Ferda went to a Club Med in France. Two other couples went to France for skiing. While they easily rationalize the trips in terms of the better quality of service and the larger number and diversity of ski runs, as they talk about the trips it is clear that a big attraction is that they get to fully participate in the Western lifestyle, much more so than in a sightseeing vacation. In the ski hotels, they get to interact with Europeans for a week or more, at breakfast, lunch, and dinner. They become acquainted with and enjoy a more direct access to the ways in which Westerners "consume" the ski vacation—how they act and the aspects of the trip that they particularly enjoy. Upon their return, HCCs deploy the Western sensibilities that they have learned on these "study trips" in order to distinguish themselves from LCCs. Ferda, for instance, insists "In Turkey everything is superficial. Turkish people come to the ski location to show off rather than to ski. Skiing is not something like that. It is a sport. While skiing you are alone, enjoying the experience. What you wear should not be important."

When Ferda skis, she emphasizes how she has adopted the Western approach. She brings only a few ski outfits and does not change them during the day. She wakes up early in the mornings, and everybody in her group goes alone to different ski routes. And they meet at lunch, and generally go for another round of skiing in the afternoon. In the night they have their dinner early and go to bed without any partying. She defines it as "a very solitary peaceful experience. Skiing is always a really active vacation for me."

*Interior Decor.* HCCs apply the same orthodox conception of the Western lifestyle to affirm their interior tastes, but in this case explicitly credentialing their tastes with references to Western cultural authority:

*Akcan:* Most of my furniture comes from outside of Turkey. I give very much importance to design. I have some designer furniture, and there is no way you can find another of the same design anywhere else. For example, I own Sottsass chairs. Nobody understands this. I know it. Only a few in Turkey knows who Sottsass is. But he is one of the most important designers in the world [Smiles]. And I own his chairs. [Where did you come across Sottsass?] In an Italian

firm, Zanotta. It is one of the most famous design firms in the world.

Akcan invokes a global aesthetic hierarchy that has anointed Igor Sottsass as one of the best modern designers and claims that she has privileged knowledge of his importance as a designer because she has taken the trouble to learn about him from an Italian design retailer. Akcan goes on to mention another designer she has favored: "I used to buy Defne Koz designs when nobody knew her. The world knew her but Turkey had not given any attention to her yet." This is a particularly revealing claim. Koz is Turkish so Akcan's interest in her seemingly violates Western lifestyle norms. But the claim that "the world knew her but Turkey did not" reveals a particularly powerful expression of the Western lifestyle. Koz trained in Italy as a disciple of Sottsass, worked in Europe and the United States, and was discovered by Western connoisseurs of modern design. So through her patronage of Koz, Akcan asserted that she was a peer with these Western consumers. But by the time of the interview, the Turkish media had promoted Koz, and she had become popular locally. So her value as a medium of Western lifestyle cultural capital plummeted. Hence Akcan uses the past tense; she is no longer interested in Koz's designs.

Likewise, HCCs denigrate LCC tastes because they continually violate the Western lifestyle code. They do not know how to organize the right ensemble to create a proper (Western) aesthetic, nor do they know how to appreciate furnishings in the proper way. For example, Nevin points out how her LCC neighbor is very insecure and anxious about the interior decor of her house, and that her house is always under construction, either being renovated, or redecorated. According to Nevin, if classical furniture is "in" this year, her LCC neighbor would buy a classically designed sofa and put it in the middle of a modern living room. Similarly Deniz describes how her interior tastes are superior to her LCC neighbor:

*Deniz:* Their [LCC] house in one sentence is a classic house with a plasma TV hanging on the walls. Because when they think of changing the TV, they think, what is the most expensive? It is plasma TV, so be it. Yes, it is expensive, you can spend as much money as you can on a plasma television, but it won't work with a classical living room set. I think it looks seriously ugly. They would have a fireplace, all hand made from copper, with engraved and inlaid real classical sofas and chairs. You might say it is a taste, you can have a classic taste. If you have a classic taste, you have a classic taste. But then their television is plasma. Their kitchens would be renovated and they would have Gaggenau . . . inside [LCC homes] you have a classical living room, you have Coşkun [an old Turkish brand] slippers, and curlers in your head and you are in front of a Gaggenau kitchen. It just does not work.

*Interviewer:* Why not?

*Deniz:* First of all, she is not using it in the right way. When we were having our kitchen done, we looked at them as well. They have a very different philosophy. The company's target market is those people who live a very modern life, who have very little time, and who want to make very delicious dishes. The thing on the oven makes fish in three minutes. But if you are that kind of woman [i.e., an LCC woman], you don't know how to make fish in three minutes, and you don't need to know. You better buy Arçelik [a Turkish brand], because Gaggenau is designed for European yuppies. It is not for you. It is against the spirit of the product. There is like, like a mix. There are things that she owned from the past but could not throw. And one high-end product with a new aesthetic, and another with a completely different aesthetic, but they still have the lace hand towels [a traditional Turkish style] in the bathroom. This house that I am describing is a real house by the way.

According to Deniz, LCCs buy the plasma TVs and Gaggenau appliances to show off their wealth. They do not use them properly because they do not understand the rules of the Western lifestyle. Here Deniz reveals the very orthodox and stylized construction of the Western lifestyle, a consistent finding across HCCs. She does not allow leeway to mix and match according to personal tastes. There are rules, rights and wrongs, that one must know and follow studiously in order to be credited by HCCs as having "good taste." According to Deniz, LCCs can never appropriate HCC tastes because they do not have the cultural resources to appreciate the "correct" meanings of these brands, so they choose the proper brands to match their lifestyle. For HCCs, the Western lifestyle is a strict orthodoxy of consumption rules that must be learned and enacted. Deniz argues that "with the old prejudices and habits nothing gets digested, you don't really wear them—they just hang on you. You have the plasma TV on your wall, a fancy car in front of your house, but you still ask your guests to leave the shoes out."

HCCs, by industriously patterning their ideas and actions after the Western Lifestyle myth and simultaneously disowning their traditional Turkish habits, strive to construct themselves as more civilized and cultured and therefore in higher standing than others with the same upper-middle-class income. In other words, the Western Lifestyle myth, a stylized Turkish discourse projecting an idealized consumer life in the West, serves as the primary form of cultural capital for HCCs.

*Deterritorialized Cultural Capital.* Rather than Bourdieu's cultural capital, which is sedimented in everyday life and continually reproduced among local cultural elites, in the Turkish context cultural capital must be imported. It is not the fruit of indigenous socialization as is the case in Bourdieu's France. Rather, it is based upon the ability to properly interpret, learn, internalize, and then enact the consumption of a distant other, what we will develop below as *deterritorialized cultural capital*.

In order to build their Western lifestyle capital, HCCs rely heavily upon extended stays and trips to the West, among

other sources. These trips function as authenticity gathering tours. While these points of contact initially were used to collect distinctive Western goods, recently they have become focused on gathering intelligence about how Westerners consume, their application of tastes and sensibilities in everyday life (see Holt 1998 for a similar periodizing argument in the United States). Rather than an easily adaptable naturalized disposition, the Western lifestyle has been constructed by HCCs as an orthodox rule book that requires literal translation and application. HCCs deploy this specialized knowledge across their consumption, which allows them to claim a special relationship to the Western middle class because they accurately imitate their lifestyle.

Because they are so invested in the global consumption field and use the Western Lifestyle myth as the source of cultural capital, HCCs have no choice but to situate the Western middle class at the top of their social class hierarchy. Despite their best efforts, HCCs often perceive that their lifestyles fall short of Western standards. Most HCCs think that, in the West, people pursue particular consumption experiences because they have intrinsic value—the experiences allow them to enact the kind of person they want to be. In the Western popular vernacular, HCCs would say that Westerners are self-actualizing. According to HCCs, Turkish culture discourages this approach to consumption. Turkey has strong norms against sticking out, so status has to work within orthodox behaviors that one has no choice but to follow. As a result consumption tends to revolve around the enactment of norms rather than the celebration of uniqueness, individuality, and innovation found in the West:

*Gaye:* We all have hobbies, we work out, we go to the cinema, but we are not that interesting. We all are very much like one another. There is no culture or social support that would encourage one to be different. In our society, being very different, having a very different hobby is not, shall I say, acceptable? When you are interested in scuba diving, there is not support, nor are there many other people who are also interested in it. There are some standard hobbies and things, but they are very limited. . . . We never walk the streets of the town alone and have a cup of coffee all by ourselves. One would never do anything different in Turkey. If you reflexively work on doing may be you would, but generally one cannot. It is like you won't even think of doing it, or if you did, you would think that it would look weird so won't do it.

According to more reflexive HCCs like Gaye, it is very difficult to mimic the incredibly heterogeneous hobbies and lifestyles of the West because there is no critical mass of fellow enthusiasts to provide social solidarity, nor is there any sort of infrastructure to support the activity. Many HCCs note that until recently they did not have access to the Western hobbies, such as skiing, skating, tennis, horseback riding, backpacking, and rafting. Because they were not socialized into these “alternative” consumption activities early on, they believe that they will always be different than the Westerners.

Ferda recently started to go trekking. She took a vacation

to the Black Sea region of Turkey, where she and her husband drove through beautiful valleys and peaks and followed the narrow village roads. When the roads turned into horse paths, they took their backpacks and hiked through the valleys to reach an out-of-the-way village pension. According to Ferda, “foreigners’ interest” put this region on the map. She and her peers needed Westerners to show them how they could enjoy aspects of Turkey that no one had noticed before. Ferda notes that “only one percent of my friends” would ever take such a trekking trip to the mountains and stay at rural pensions because “they have not reached the maturity level. It is a new culture to enjoy life. To enjoy life and to live a quality life. We, if at all, are only recently learning that.”

Paradoxically, for HCCs to really enjoy themselves and have a good quality of life is a difficult struggle, in large part because to do so requires mimicking Western tastes and practices that are largely alien to Turkish culture. As much as they claim to appropriate the West in the right way, they realize that they are unable to imitate the core of Western middle-class consumption: expressing one’s individuality through one’s pursuit of particular experiences.

For the very few who do pursue a new hobby, it is still pursued with an other-directed sensibility. Sevil, “against all odds” as she says, pursued her interest in learning about international cuisines. When she heard that a world-famous Japanese cook was offering sushi preparation courses at Istanbul, she traveled there once a week for a month to attend these classes. Even though she really enjoyed the experience, she still comments how sad she was that “nobody valued what I did. Nobody supported me.” In order to enjoy her personal hobby, she needed recognition from and solidarity with others. Without this support, she was unable to sustain her enthusiasm.

HCCs’ dogged pursuit of the Western Lifestyle myth leads many of them to the vexing conclusion that they will never truly succeed. As much as they try, they are filled with existential doubts about the credibility of their efforts. Their perception that they are unable to enact Western lifestyle in a natural taken-for-granted way forces them to acknowledge that they actually occupy a rung on the global class ladder below the Western middle class whom they want so much to view as peers.

## TOWARD A THEORY OF STATUS CONSUMPTION IN LICs

We develop a theory tailored specifically to explain how status consumption operates among the middle classes in LICs. We do so through an empirical study in which we place two literatures into productive conversation. We draw upon insights from the cultural globalization literature to revise three key constructs in Bourdieu’s theory of status consumption—cultural capital, habitus, and consumption field. In so doing, we advance a Bourdieuan theory of LIC status consumption that introduces a new direction for cultural globalization research. Our theory also provides a more

nanced and accurate explanation for LIC status consumption than the global trickle-down model.

### Orthodox Practice of the Western Lifestyle Myth as Cultural Capital

We demonstrate that Turkey has a consumption field in which classes compete to mobilize their economic and cultural resources via their consumption in order to claim higher social standing. And we find that different class factions rely on different consumption strategies—one emphasizing pecuniary displays and one focused on cultural sophistication—that align with their capital composition, just as Bourdieu's theory suggests.

However, cultural capital takes on a qualitatively different form in LICs, compared with the Bourdieuan model—the scripted practice of the Western Lifestyle myth. The Western lifestyle is a Turkish discourse that presents a stylized depiction of middle-class consumption in the West, particularly the United States. The Western lifestyle is a compact and orthodox set of tastes and practices that symbolize middle-class Western consumption from the Turkish point-of-view. HCCs display cultural capital by expressing the Western lifestyle in an orthodox script-like fashion across a range of consumption domains.

In Bourdieu's status consumption theory, cultural capital is entirely different. Cultural capital centers on the expression of sophisticated tastes, emphasizing aesthetics, abstraction, improvisation, eclecticism, cosmopolitanism, and authenticity (Bourdieu 1984; Holt 1998). In contemporary consumer cultures, there is no epicenter from which cultural capital flows; virtually any category of consumption or locale is susceptible to appropriation via cultural capital (Holt 1998). Nor are cultural capital expressions scripted—just the opposite. While some objects symbolize cultural capital, it is because they are difficult to enjoy properly and, so, one must learn the aesthetic codes required to do so (e.g., the embodied cultural capital in high art as discussed in Bourdieu 1984). In fact, one of the most potent expressions of cultural capital is to take an object conventionally considered lowbrow and aestheticize it into a pleasurable highbrow experience through the interpretive power of one's cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). The most successful expressions of cultural capital are improvised, applied in an unexpected manner, leading to interesting expressions of taste.

The idea that a local construction of the Western lifestyle is the core resource for status construction aligns well with the cultural globalization literature (e.g., Mazzarella 2003; Öncü 1997; Üstüner and Holt 2007). We extend previous research on this concept in two ways. First, rather than a generic status currency, we demonstrate that adherence to the Western Lifestyle myth is inextricably linked to cultural capital (and not economic capital): only HCCs rely upon the Western lifestyle as cultural capital, while LCCs aggressively dismiss it. Second, we show that the Western lifestyle is an orthodox portfolio of consumption practices. The Western lifestyle specifies a set of consumption prac-

tices whose orthodox display showcases ones Western sensibilities, which is often more important than the deployment of brands and goods as Western status symbols.

While the consumption of the Western lifestyle as an LIC status expression may appear to be similar to cosmopolitanism noted in developed countries (Holt 1998; Thompson and Tambyah 1999), in fact the two concepts are quite different. Cosmopolitanism signifies that one is appreciative of the widest range and most culturally distant goods, places and tastes. In particular, cosmopolitans value material culture that stems from the seemingly authentic social relations of premodern worlds untainted by commercial capitalism (Holt 1998). Alternatively, for Turkish HCCs, enacting the Western lifestyle is a means to become intimately associated with the most prestigious countries in the world. The Western lifestyle is a means to push as far away as possible from association with the premodern, which in Turkey is a constant status threat.

### Deterritorialized Cultural Capital and the Quest to Transcend Habitus

We also demonstrate that the process through which cultural capital is accumulated and enacted in LICs, what we term *deterritorialized cultural capital*, works very differently than in the Bourdieu model. Another of Bourdieu's most influential constructs is *habitus*, which he introduces as the psychobodily mechanism that unconsciously mediates class socialization and expressions of status through consumption. According to Bourdieu, tastes and practices are learned unintentionally through many redundant experiences, mostly in childhood. Everyday interactions in the family, at school, and among friends are the main socialization pathways through which people accumulate cultural capital. So if one is situated in the appropriate class position, cultural capital accrues without any explicit effort as because it is deeply embedded in these local milieus. By the time one is an adult, the class-inflected habitus has become internalized so that expressions of cultural capital come naturally without premeditation. The term *habitus* is intended to capture this habituated dispositional aspect of status consumption: tastes and practices accumulate, they are not learned, and they are expressed without thought, never strategically.

We show that cultural capital accumulation proceeds very differently in Turkey, requiring sustained proactive "work" that extends well into adulthood. Acquisition is heavily reliant on education, but of a different sort. In Turkey, elite childhood education defines the most important cultural asset to be perfect command of the English language (or, occasionally French or German), not Turkish language, literature, or history (Acar and Ayata 2002). This Western-focused education is itself a powerful form of cultural capital, and, just as important, it builds the pathways allowing HCCs to learn the Western lifestyle. Cultural capital acquisition begins in earnest with family trips to the West, and becomes especially intensive from the college years (with



the requisite stint in the West) through early adulthood (with many “pedagogical” trips to the West). It is no coincidence that HCCs promote in-depth knowledge of the Western lifestyle as central to their moral order. These tastes are a near-perfect cultural articulation of the formal and informal educational assets they have accrued.

As a result of this strategic acculturation process, the expression of cultural capital operates, not through Bourdieu’s habitus, but rather through a strategic “by-the-book” pursuit of tastes that have been explicitly defined and circulate in the discourse. HCCs work industriously to transform their habitus-instilled tastes, a process that in Bourdieu’s (1984) analysis is indicative of lower cultural capital. As a result, we demonstrate that HCCs tend to be reflexively insecure about their ability to successfully deploy the Western lifestyle in a manner that yields cultural capital.

This strategic consumption orthodoxy, and its reflexive insecurity, results from what we term the *detrterritorialization* of cultural capital. Deterritorialization, a term originated by DeLeuze and Guattari (1972; see also Appadurai 1996) and now a key construct in anthropology, sociology, and media studies, refers to the decoupling of linkages between space and culture, typically by external forces. The study of deterritorialization is central to cultural globalization research that studies migration and cultural flows (e.g., while he doesn’t use the term, this phenomenon is central to Wilk’s [2006] analysis) but has not previously been applied to the mechanics of cultural capital.

For our purposes, we use *detrterritorialization* to refer to the impact of the incursion of Western cultural power into LIC consumption fields due to the socioeconomic domination of the West. In Turkey, and likely other semiperiphery countries with the same dominated relationship to the West, all but the most culturally elite factions (artists, intelligentsia, and the like) are dominated by the tastes, sensibilities, and practices of the West. They experience the distinction claims embedded in the Western lifestyle as more legitimate than what is possible with local cultural expressions. As a result, their quest to enhance their social class position necessarily leads them to pursue a form of cultural capital that is alien to their local culture.

Building deterritorialized cultural capital is particularly arduous. This task—learning the cultural codes and sensibilities of peoples of other nations—is not unlike learning a particularly cryptic and complex foreign language. Despite the HCCs’ best efforts, because the Western lifestyle is not part of the HCC habitus, it stubbornly remains as borrowed culture, an add-on aspect of their identity projects. When they compare themselves with the Westerners who have become acculturated in the redundant embedded manner described by Bourdieu, Turkish HCCs can feel like posers trying to imitate others. They are forced to consider the differences between their deterritorialized cultural capital and the embedded form prevalent among HCCs in the West.

## Indigenizing the Global Consumption Field

In Bourdieu’s model, the consumption field (the social field delineating status competition in everyday consumer life and mass culture) is assumed to consist of the relational set of social positions within a particular nation-state, in which consumers compete for symbolic power with their class-inflected consumption practices. The assumption that the nation constitutes the social boundaries of the field is never problematized. In contrast, the cultural globalization literature assumes a global consumption field for LICs, one that is dominated by Western countries.

Our analysis yields a different result. Rather than a pre-determined structure, national or global, we show that the boundary of the consumption field is contested. HCCs and LCCs compete, in the first instance, to define the scope of the field. The profound sociocultural power of the West strongly favors the global consumption field. So, sustaining a national construction of the field in the face of vast media and marketing incursions from the West is an ongoing accomplishment central to the LCC status consumption strategy.

This LCC strategy is a distinctive type of indigenization. Pecuniary status is hard to pull off in LICs because the media is filled with images of Westerners who are richer and have better access to luxury goods markets. Yet LCCs are able to continually bracket out Western consumers as a point of comparison and constantly reinforce that their peers are only other Turks. This continual indigenization of the field allows LCCs to compete favorably with HCCs, in effect denying that the Western lifestyle plays any role in attaining status.

This indigenization of status claims differs from how indigenization is conceived in the cultural globalization literature, where it is treated as a form of national identity construction that plays off the cultural dominance of the West. While our 36 informants share a certain brand of Turkish nationalism, the importance of being perceived as having high social status within Turkey far outweighs their interest in asserting their Turkishness over other national identities. Indigenization involves not only constructing local identity in a dialectic engagement with Western cultural power, but also constructing status for class factions that lack the cultural capital to compete in the global consumption field.

In sum, we revise three of Bourdieu’s key constructs—cultural capital, habitus, and social field—in order to theorize how status consumption operates in Turkey. We hypothesize that other semiperiphery countries that have undergone a similar trajectory with the West are likely to share these same features, though confirmation of this claim must await future research. This provisional theory of LIC status consumption extends Bourdieu’s model to provide more explanatory precision in this important context and improves upon the oft-invoked global trickle down model as well. Our model also provides a new sociological direction for cultural globalization research, adapting existing concepts to theorize status consumption.

## Limitations and Future Research

This study offers a status consumption theory that is tailored to account for LICs, particularly the new consumer classes in the semiperiphery. We do so through a study of one such country, Turkey. While we expect that studies conducted in other semiperiphery countries will yield similar results, this is an empirical question. Future research should pursue this inference to examine the robustness of this article's claims and to push for additional contextualized insights.

Furthermore, this study focuses only on social class indicators (economic and cultural capital) while bracketing out other important dimensions, such as ethnicity, gender, life-stage, and religiosity. Future studies that examine the intersection of these social categories would be valuable. In particular, Islamic identity is becoming an increasingly important dimension of consumer identity projects in many LICs (e.g., Navaro-Yashin 2002; Saktanber 2002; Sandıkçı and Ger 2005; White 1999) and we expect that results will differ substantially for this group (see Arnould 1989 for an argument along these lines).

Since we focus on the upper-middle class, research that examines the extremes of cultural capital and economic capital would improve the comprehensiveness of the theory. We expect that studies of cultural elites (artists and the intelligentsia) in LICs would reveal an inversion of the value ascribed to Western lifestyle capital and, instead, an industrious effort to aestheticize and consecrate local culture in order to produce a countervailing cultural currency. Likewise, a study of upper-class industrialists in LICs would, we believe, reveal the inversion of the indigenized national consumption field asserted by LCCs in our study. As the upper class has the money to play in the Western leagues of status consumption, we expect that their Veblenian project would be adamantly global. Future research will hopefully advance beyond these speculations to push toward a comprehensive landscaping of the consumption field in LICs.

Finally, let us conclude by commenting on the historical aspects of our model with an eye to the future. We propose that the basic elements of the model—the local construction of an orthodoxy of Western lifestyle consumption practices as the dominant form of cultural capital, the challenges that HCCs face to learn and practice this deterritorialized cultural capital, and the indigenization of the consumption field by LCCs—are durable so long as the power relations between core and periphery nation-states remain stable (see Wilk [2006] for evidence of this relationship in Belize). However, the particulars of LIC status strategies will necessarily evolve as the dialectics of competition within the consumption field change the rules of the game.

How might HCC status expressions of the Western lifestyle discourse shift in the future? Geniş's (2007) study of Istanbul's elite gated communities provides a clue. She studies some of the new and particularly posh gated communities populated by upper-class Turks with considerably higher economic and cultural capital than our informants. Ottoman cultural elements are embedded in the architectural details

of these communities in what appears to be a straightforward nod to local culture. But it turns out that the design was championed by an American firm with explicit intent to mimic the American style of architecture that seeks to convey local authenticity by using building remnants as an historic façade. Presumably the patrons of the development are well aware of this American practice and value its Turkish application. So while the cultural content of their status expression has become Turkish, the cultural form is still diffused from the West. This new aspect of the Western lifestyle—specifying the proper methods for commodifying and consuming the local—deserves close attention. Does this emerging local status strategy, centered on commodified authenticity, remain embedded in a Western lifestyle orthodoxy so that it must be learned in the deterritorialized manner we describe? Or will LIC new consumers be able to reterritorialize their culture and establish a truly local consumption field?

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