



MARK-E0058 SOCIOLOGY OF CONSUMPTION AND FASHION

CONSUMER COLLECTIVES  
AND FASHION



# Grading and Assignment 2

- Aiming to have the grades out on Wednesday night!

## **Assignment 2**

- For a high grade:
  - Make sure to compare and contrast readings in relation to your chosen example.
    - E.g., try to discuss the readings in relation to each other and your topic.
- Remember to look at the grading rubric!
- Example Essays
- Also, my colleague Tanya will be observing this lecture

What are some of the social groups that influence your fashion practices?

What subcultures, communities, or groups can you identify among members of Aalto University?  
Can you identify a subculture you are part of?

How do these groups “do” fashion?



Subcultures

Subcultures of consumption

Brand communities

Tribes

Communities and Subcultures in relation to the production of fashion

Why is marketing so infatuated with subcultures?

Recent critiques against subcultures and communities of consumption



## Cultural capital

- “What you know”
- Embodied knowledge of what is important in the field
- “This-over-that” tacit intuition



## Social capital

- “Who you know”
- Field connections
- Name recognition in field

## Economic capital

- “What you own”
- Money, possession of valued field artifacts

## Symbolic capital

- Particular forms of social/cultural/economic capital can become legitimate markers of prestige, respect, or authority in the field

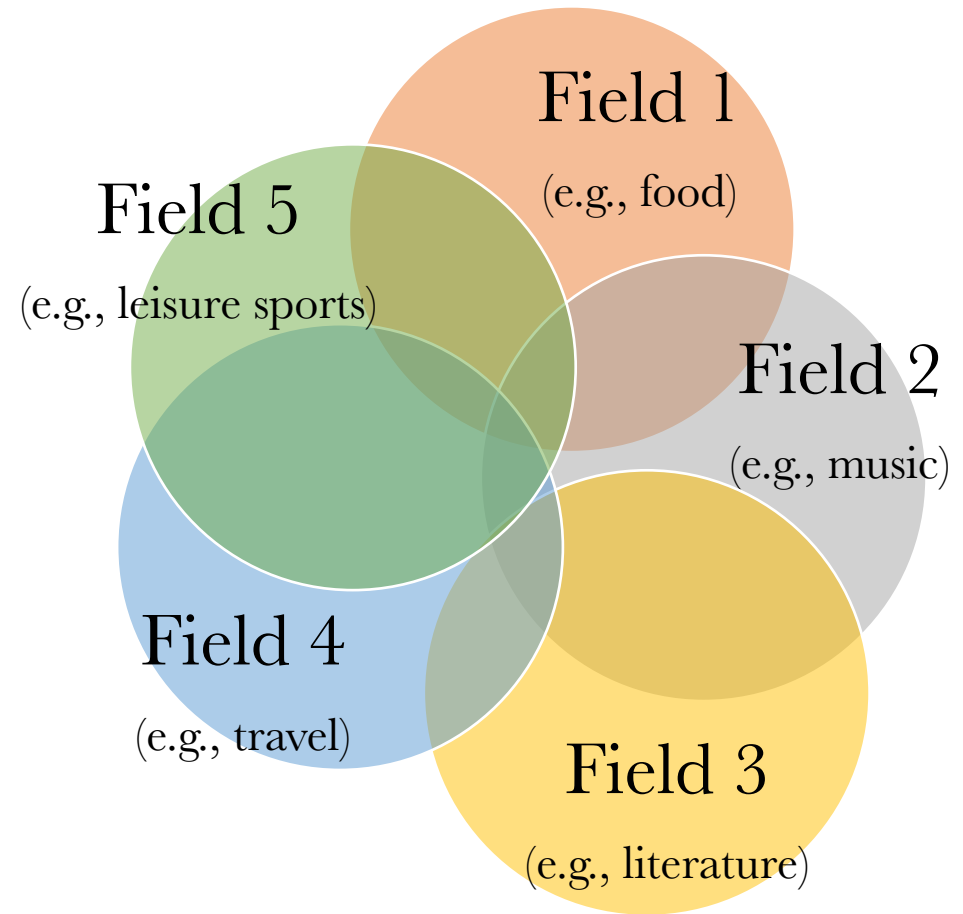


“Bourdieu saw these capital endowments accruing gradually through one’s upbringing and resulting in socialized dispositions that make people with similar capital stocks prefer certain consumption fields over others. In other words, children of similar class backgrounds acquire habituated skills and aesthetic preferences through immersion into similar hobbies, vacation plans, and educational paths all the way up to higher education.”



Field-related  
capitals have  
different levels of  
transferability or  
convertibility within  
fields...

*... and across fields*





# Perusall comments: Kawamura

- *“Marketing research around subcultures often focuses on subcultures of consumption that are easy to identify based on a common consumption practice, or even better, a single object like here. From my point of view this occurs to an extent that skews the notion of a subculture explicitly as a consumption community but overlooks the reason why they exist”*
- *“It has also been stated that fashion is just combining re-existing elements of fashion and the code of dress and nothing new can be generally created. So where do new trends really come from and who generates them?”*

# Perusall comments: Kawamura

- *“Sub-cultures are almost always constructed around a single product or brand, which becomes their symbol of identification (e.g., bikers --> Harley Davidson).”*
- *“Historically that has not been the case.... There are different ideologies and movements that starts the underground- and subcultures for example hippies in the 60's and punks in the 70's. Of course the conformity of the styles brings out and highlights different products/brands that are used, but for example hippies and punks didn't have special brands or products that they would admire.... it was considered better not have any branded clothing but something that was **DIY** (do it yourself).”*

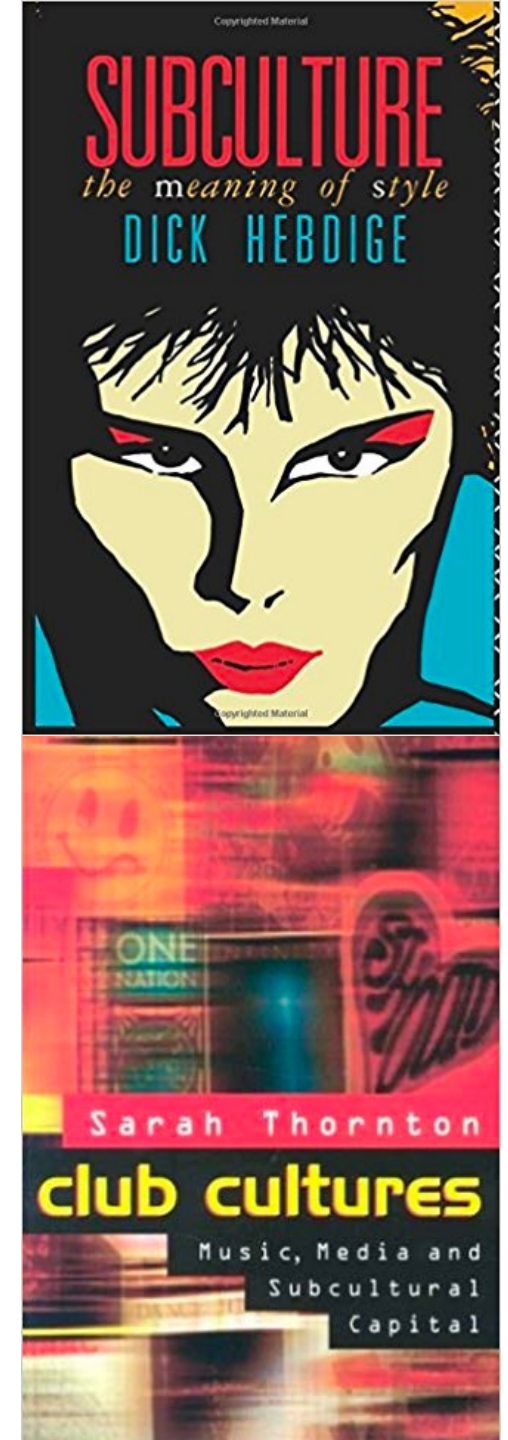
# Perusall comments: Kawamura

- *“when exactly does a subculture stop being a subculture?”*
- *“if forms of capital (economic, social and cultural) can be transformed to other forms of capital, couldn't the cultural capital, that a person in the social field of a subculture has, be turned into economic capital? Making them more wealthy?”*

Research into subcultures found that these groups **have their own systems of language, aesthetics, and fashion** that do not adhere or become subjugated to those of the elites.

This represents a major addendum to Bourdieu's fashion and field theory.

Later, subcultures have become sources of inspiration for mainstream fashion trends



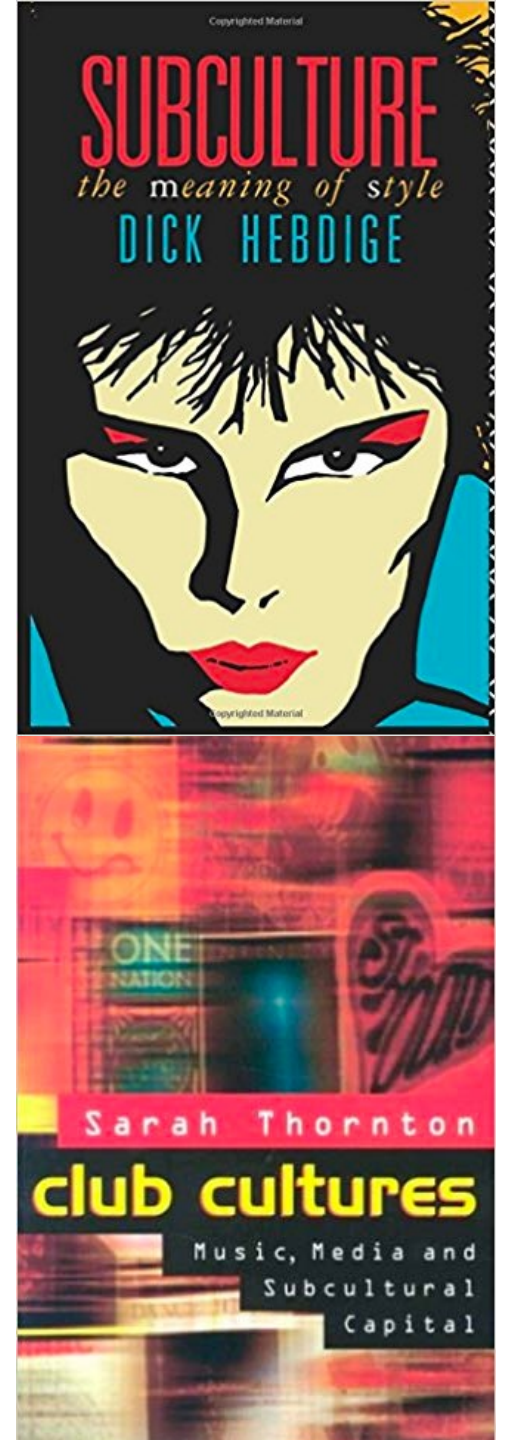


*reminder*

Fashion is about **movement!**

Truly beautiful clothing would put an end to fashion. The latter can do nothing but deny, repress and efface it—while conserving, with each new outing, the alibi of beauty. (Baudrillard)

The essence of fashion consists of the fact that it should always be exercised by only part of a given group, the great majority of whom are merely on the road to adopting it. (Simmels)



Structure

Ethos

Self-transformation

Relationship to  
Marketing

## **Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of the New Bikers**

JOHN W. SCHOUTEN  
JAMES H. MCALEXANDER\*

This article introduces the subculture of consumption as an analytic category through which to better understand consumers and the manner in which they organize their lives and identities. Recognizing that consumption activities, product categories, or even brands may serve as the basis for interaction and social cohesion, the concept of the subculture of consumption solves many problems inherent in the use of ascribed social categories as devices for understanding consumer behavior. This article is based on three years of ethnographic fieldwork with Harley-Davidson motorcycle owners. A key feature of the fieldwork was a process of progressive contextualization of the researchers from outsiders to insiders situated within the subculture. Analysis of the social structure, dominant values, and revealing symbolic behaviors of this distinct, consumption-oriented subculture have led to the advancement of a theoretical framework that situates subcultures of consumption in the context of modern consumer culture and discusses, among other implications, a symbiosis between such subcultures and marketing institutions. Transferability of the principal findings of this research to other subcultures of consumption is established through comparisons with ethnographies of other self-selecting, consumption-oriented subcultures.





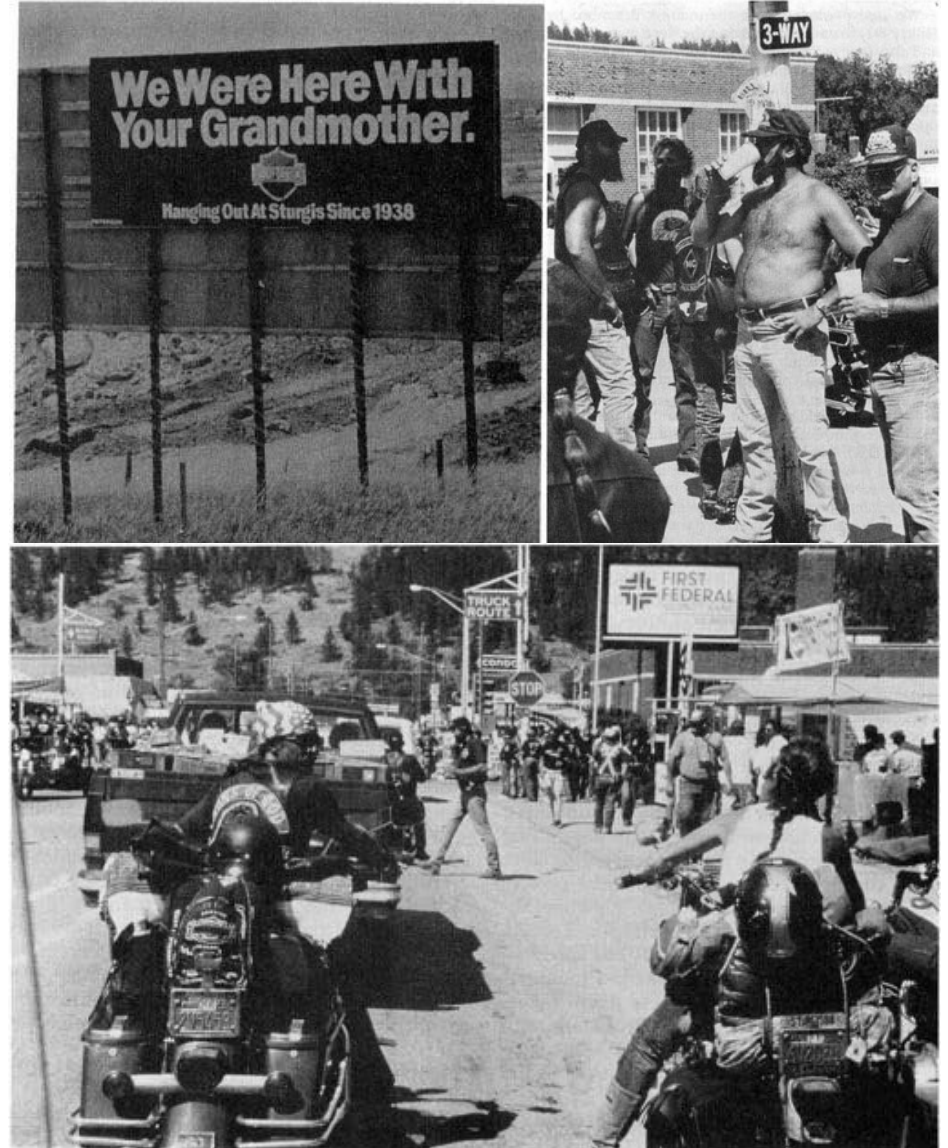
How do these "become"  
fashion?

*Structure*

*Ethos*

*Self-transformation*

*Relationship to Marketing*







*reminder*

A new fashion will initially feel like a **transgression**—almost an insult!

Fashion: “Busting a code open”



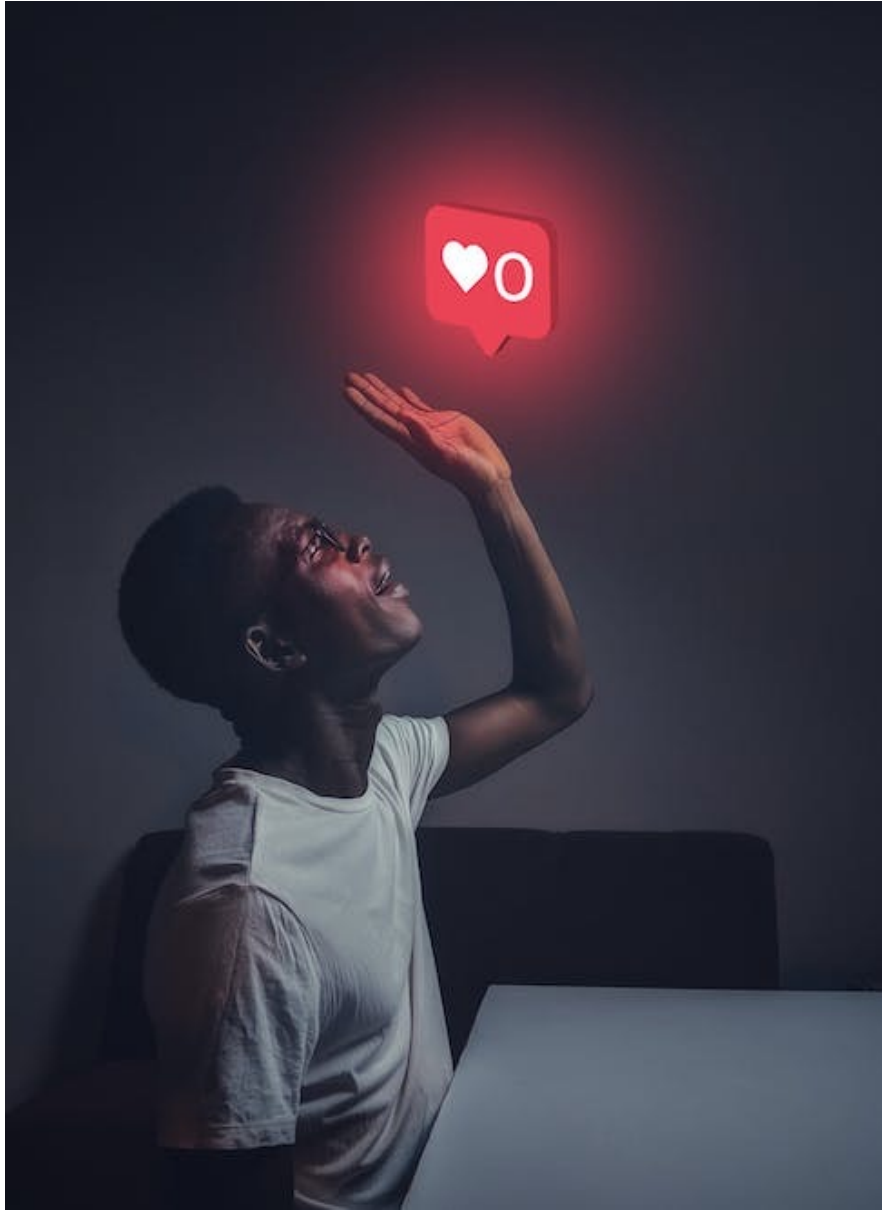
	<b>Subculture</b>	<b>Subculture of Consumption</b>	<b>Brand Community</b>	<b>Tribe</b>
<i>Orientation</i>	Social orientation	Socially oriented but dynamics center on consumption	Commodity oriented	Social orientation
<i>Basis of existence</i>	Experience based	Commodity based	Brand based	Emotionality
<i>Relation to mainstream norms</i>	Escapist from mainstream norms	Operates within mainstream norms	Embraces mainstream norms	Varied
<i>Practitioner reach</i>	Global practiced + mobility	Globally practiced	Globally practiced but no movement	Varied (glocal)
<i>Mode of communication</i>	Multi-sited communication	Multi-sited communication	Mostly digital communication	Multi-sited communication
<i>Locus of activity</i>	Activity precedes commercial context	Activity requires commercial context	Activity requires commercial context	Varied
<i>Relation to commercial interests</i>	Activity exists outside of commercial interests	Activity dominated by commercial interests	Activity centered around commercial interests	Linking value, entrepreneurialism
<i>Sources of inspiration</i>	A variety of inspirations	Draws from limited variety of inspirations	Draws from singular inspiration	A variety of inspirations

## ***Key question:***

To what degree is a particular field of fashion shaped by actors who are not, in a traditional sense, fashion designers or producers?

Can you think of an example of new fashion influencers whose authority stems from non-traditional fashion fields?







CELEBRITY STYLE

## The Fashion Evolution of Kendall Jenner: From Reality TV Star to Stunning Supermodel



“In these intervening years we have witnessed the death of the relatively monolithic subculture of consumption that we first encountered. In its place we have observed the emergence of something larger and richer, something we are more comfortable thinking about as a complex brand community or a mosaic of microcultures.

Growth increases diversity. The empowerment of subcultural ‘others’, (i.e., non-male, non-white, non-straight, etc.) in social life tends also to increase the liberalization or democratization of subcultures of consumption. Diversity opens the symbolism of a subculture to other contexts and lived experiences, leading to multiple meanings and multiple authenticities. This also challenges and undermines the authority of the hegemonic perspective.”

*Consumption, Markets and Culture,*  
Vol. 9, No. 3, September 2006, pp. 171–205



## Claiming the Throttle: Multiple Femininities in a Hyper-Masculine Subculture

Diane M. Martin, John W. Schouten & James H. McAlexander



## “Something is missing”: Melancholia and belonging in collective consumption

**Alice Wickstrom** 

Aalto University School of Business, Finland

**Iain Denny**

Uppsala University, Sweden

**Joel Hietanen** 

University of Helsinki, Finland

### Abstract

In this essay, we explore the limits of marketized belonging through Kristeva’s theorization of melancholia and desire. This allows us to problematize “joyful” accounts of societal re-enchantment and how “belonging” through collectives of consumption (such as neo-tribes, subcultures of consumption, and brand communities) is generally seen as a natural response to modernist rationalization and increased individualization. Instead, we argue that the scholarly understanding of collective forms of consumption has been premised upon paradoxical ground due to the notion of the subject-as-consumer as lacking often being implicitly reproduced, albeit theoretically neglected, allowing for the reproduction of romanticized ideals of marketized “communality.” We foreground how tensions between individuality and communality are negotiated within markets and argue that collective forms of consumption feed upon separation, fragmentation, and the suspension of “joy” rather than relationality and belonging. We propose that this allows for a better understanding of the desire to *become* through collective consumption and direct further attention toward questions related to liminality, detachment, loss, and exclusion.

### Keywords

Belonging, collective consumption, desire, Kristeva, lack, liminality, melancholia, psychoanalysis



Marketing Theory  
2021, Vol. 21(1) 75–91  
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DOI: 10.1177/1470593120937340  
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## Biopolitical Marketing and Social Media Brand Communities

**Detlev Zwick**

York University

**Alan Bradshaw**

Royal Holloway, University of London

### Abstract

This article offers an analysis of marketing as an ideological set of practices that makes cultural interventions designed to infuse social relations with biopolitical injunctions. We examine a contemporary site of heightened attention within marketing: the rise of online communities and the attendant profession of social media marketing managers. We argue that social media marketers disavow a core problem; namely, that the object at stake, the customer community, barely exists. The community therefore functions ideologically. We describe the ideological gymnastics necessary for maintaining momentum behind a practice that barely exists and we ponder why such ideologies are necessary, and what they allow the marketer to do. Working with such concepts as ‘the wild’, ‘communicative capitalism’, and ‘biopolitical marketing’, we explore a genre of popular business literature that proselytizes for online customer communities and we reflect on the broader implications.

### Keywords

biopolitics, brand communities, communicative capitalism, consumers, ideology, social media marketing

Theory, Culture & Society  
2016, Vol. 33(5) 91–115

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DOI: 10.1177/0263276415625333

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# Why such a focus on subcultures in marketing?

- Segmentation
- Gold mine of *new* popular aesthetics
- Commodification



# Subcultures – Fashion and Commodification

A darker side?

What happens to the values, community/solidarity and the possibility of collective action and identity when a subculture gets commodified?

“I do not really understand how a subculture is defined as underground and upperground. Does it mean that the subculture is more explicitly expressed if it's upperground?”

## Let's take the case of Hip-Hop

- Inherently political, voicing struggles of discrimination, racism and violence against African Americans in America.
- Commodification --> Makes hip-hop visible and accessible (upperground) --> money
  - Increasingly apolitical

*“To me, hip-hop says, “Come as you are.” We are a family. It ain’t about security. It ain’t about bling bling. It ain’t about how much your gun can shoot. It ain’t about 200\$ sneakers. It is not about me being better than you or you being better than me. It’s about you and me connecting one to one.” (DJ Kool Herc)*

*“Its not authentic when you buy it off a shelf. It’s just not.” (Chang 2006, in Kawamura, 2018)*



## Veiling in Style: How Does a Stigmatized Practice Become Fashionable?

ÖZLEM SANDIKCI  
GÜLİZ GER

Although stigma is prevalent in everyday life, consumer researchers' interest on the topic remains scant and focuses mostly on stigma management. We move beyond individual coping strategies and examine the processes of stigmatization and destigmatization. Through an ethnographic study of fashion consumption practices of urban Turkish covered women, we explore how veiling, a deviant practice stigmatized in the secular and urban mind-set, first became an attractive choice for some middle-class women and then transformed into a fashionable and ordinary clothing practice for many. We map out the global multi-actored work that underlies the emergence of veiling as an attractive choice and explicate its gradual routinization and destigmatization. We discuss the findings in terms of their implications for understandings of choice and free will, the formative role of fashion in the evolution of a new habitus and social class, and the relationship between the market and religion.

“From the consumer’s point of view, getting tattoos, wearing jeans, and dressing as a Trekkie, unlike being of a particular ethnicity, are practices s/he volitionally chooses to engage in or not. But then, **how and why do consumers voluntarily choose a stigmatized practice, how and why do these practices become fashionable and ordinary consumption choices, and why do only some of these practices become so?**”

## Veiling in Style: How Does a Stigmatized Practice Become Fashionable?

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Rising social status, wealth,  
and cultural capital

VS.

Religious traditions of humility  
and anti-laicity

*Tesettür* women resolve this  
code conflict through fashion  
innovation









# Frustrated Fatshionistas: An Institutional Theory Perspective on Consumer Quests for Greater Choice in Mainstream Markets

DAIANE SCARABOTO  
EILEEN FISCHER

Why and how do marginalized consumers mobilize to seek greater inclusion in and more choice from mainstream markets? We develop answers to these questions drawing on institutional theory and a qualitative investigation of Fatshionistas, plus-sized consumers who want more options from mainstream fashion marketers. Three triggers for mobilization are posited: development of a collective identity, identification of inspiring institutional entrepreneurs, and access to mobilizing institutional logics from adjacent fields. Several change strategies that reinforce institutional logics while unsettling specific institutionalized practices are identified. Our discussion highlights diverse market change dynamics that are likely when consumers are more versus less legitimate in the eyes of mainstream marketers and in instances where the changes consumers seek are more versus less consistent with prevailing institutions and logics.

Subcultures and such often shun the marketplace.

So why and when would a subculture of consumption actively *seek* marketplace inclusion?



**MEET THE fatshionistas**

These women prove there's no one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to style

**W**hen Heather Hughes, a 28-year-old Sydney-based stylist, started her blog [TheFatshionista](#) in 2014, she had no idea how popular it'd become. The self-proclaimed fashionista also never imagined from just the start that her blog would become a hub for plus-size fashion inspiration, modeling tips, and positivity. And all of this started off as a fashion blogging hobby for her.

Heather Hughes, a 28-year-old professional stylist, has recently launched [TheFatshionista](#), the online fashion blog that has become a hub for plus-size fashion inspiration, modeling tips, and positivity. And all of this started off as a fashion blogging hobby for her.

**fatshionista**

It's a online community of plus-size women sharing their style tips, advice, inspiration, shopping recommendations, and supporting their needs to find the fun in fashion at any size. It's based on the idea that you don't need to be a size 12 to enjoy shopping, so, and it's a safe space for the confidence that is growing from within for the plus-size community.

**style savour**

Heather Hughes is also breaking down the stereotypes that the fashion world has. The many fashion rules that have been set in stone are being challenged. Heather Hughes is also breaking down the stereotypes that the fashion world has. The many fashion rules that have been set in stone are being challenged.

**the positives**

Heather Hughes is also breaking down the stereotypes that the fashion world has. The many fashion rules that have been set in stone are being challenged.

**key to confidence**

Heather Hughes is also breaking down the stereotypes that the fashion world has. The many fashion rules that have been set in stone are being challenged.

**don't believe in fashion rules. wear what makes you happy.**

# Scaraboto and Fischer

- *“It feels insane that businesses are not capitalizing this enough, if about 40% of Americans are plus size, making fashionable plus size clothes would seem like profitable business.”*

Similar thing with Age

The rational market vs societal and cultural values, norms and ideologies.

# Scaraboto and Fischer

*“I have encountered people on social media who have pointed out that even though parts of the fashion world are representing plus-size bodies, it seems that still for most people there is only **one type of a plus-sized body** that is accepted. This body type is usually a clear hourglass shape, small waist, flat tummy, round hips, no double chin, etc. In other words, bigger version of the current beauty standard, just in a different size. Has anyone else seen or heard about this discrimination amongst especially plus-sized bodies? Any examples?”*

**What do you think? How are plus-sized bodies regarded, treated and negotiated in fashion today?**

*“I see the pursuit of success as one of the underlying ideals behind the stigma of obesity. This relates heavily to existential philosophy, particularly calvinism, where you have to work hard to be rewarded at the end (Max Weber).”*



# Perusall comments: Scaraboto and Fischer

The influence wielded by bloggers 10 years ago vs influencers now  
Status of plus-sized clothing then and now.

- *“Over ten years after the publication of this article... The runaways and fashion magazines, as well as most of the photographs found in mainstream brands' websites, are predominantly slim women, unless they showcase a curvier or plus-sized celebrity.”*
- *“Not only are clothes designed for the body, but your body also determines which clothes you can even wear....Makes me wonder what percentage of (high) fashion is just about being thin and what part is actually about the clothes”*

**Tension between the inclusion of plus-size clothing alongside old social norms and values of slimness, fitness and being thin?**



**TABLE 2**

SOURCES AND TYPES OF VARIATION IN MARKET CHANGE DYNAMICS

What consumers want	How consumers are perceived in mainstream market	
	Consumers have less legitimacy in mainstream market	Consumers have greater legitimacy in mainstream market
To be better served by mainstream marketers	<p>Consumers are <i>Stigmatized Seekers</i>  <i>Example:</i> Fatshionistas who want to buy clothes from mainstream manufacturers and retailers  <i>Anticipated dynamic:</i> If consumers are persistent in pursuing their change agenda, a few mainstream marketers will expand their offerings over time</p>	<p>Consumers are <i>Comfortable Collaborators</i>  <i>Example:</i> Members of brand communities who collaborate with one another and with marketers to refine existing market offerings or design new ones  <i>Anticipated dynamic:</i> Incremental changes to market offerings will be continuous as marketers collaborate with customers in an effort to keep them loyal</p>
Fundamental changes to market practices	<p>Consumers are <i>Resistant Rebels</i>  <i>Example:</i> American protestors against genetically engineered food  <i>Anticipated dynamic:</i> Marginal changes if any to institutionalized practices</p>	<p>Consumers are <i>Mainstream Malcontents</i>  <i>Example:</i> Music consumers who want to download songs for free  <i>Anticipated dynamic:</i> If changes threaten marketers' profitability, marketers will resist but find a compromise</p>

How do “mainstream consumers” relate to subcultures, brand communities, and tribes?

How do these influence the fashion choices of those who are not in these social groups?

“How much” do mainstream consumers draw from subcultures etc.?





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## Downplaying class with style Middle class anxiety and the aesthetic performance of role distance

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

Middle class taste  
Middle class anxiety  
Popular culture aesthetics  
Performativity  
Role distance  
Footnote

### ABSTRACT

Discourses on middle class taste, lifestyle and 'aesthetics' have emphasized how middle class agents orient to mark their position by appropriating 'legitimate' cultural goods and practices and eschewing 'illegitimate' ones. This paper examines what could be learned, if the analytical perspective is broadened and shifted from the sociocultural distinction games between collective class agents to actual situated performances, and the stylistic and expressive means, with which middle class agents relate themselves also to their own class and to its – sometimes troublesome – cultural, aesthetic and moral conventions and expectations. We formulate one version of such a reflexively relational approach to the complexities of middle class agency and its performative enactment. By utilizing analytical tools originally developed by Erving Goffman, and applied here to analyze some excerpts from the film *American Beauty*, we demonstrate how aesthetic performativity oriented to the 'downplaying' of class distinctions can be used by middle class agents to pursue authenticity and to resist, and gain experiential distance from, the agonizing middle class roles, expectations and 'principals' readily surrounding them.

Popular and subculture aesthetics can be effectively used by middle class agents to **downplay unwanted, outwardly generated class expectations.**

Popular and subculture aesthetics can be effectively used by middle class agents **to pursue experiential authenticity.**

How do subcultures and such  
respond to the appropriation of  
their fashion items or symbols?



# A Master Class In Rocking Geek Chic In 2017

Get ready to be schooled



BY SABRINA CARDER 23/03/2017



# Look Of The Day: Kendall Jenner Does Geek Chic

## Kendall Jenner channels Harry Potter



BY LENA DE CASPARIS 11/09/2015



Just when we thought we had her look down, and knew what to expect from our favourite Jenner - she went and threw an awesome fashion curve ball at us yesterday.

Pairing some white jeans (yes, post labour day) and a 70s inspired roll neck, to top off her look Kendall seems to have borrowed some specs from our favourite teen wizzard - Harry Potter.

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So chic.





## Demythologizing Consumption Practices: How Consumers Protect Their Field- Dependent Identity Investments from Devaluing Marketplace Myths

ZEYNEP ARSEL  
CRAIG J. THOMPSON

Marketplace myths are commonly conceptualized as cultural resources that attract consumers to a consumption activity or brand. This theoretical orientation is prone to overstating the extent to which consumers' identity investments in a field of consumption are motivated by an associated marketplace myth. We provide a theoretical corrective to this tendency by investigating consumers who have become vested in a commercially mythologized consumption field through an incremental process of building social connections and cultural capital. For these consumers, the prevailing marketplace myth is experienced as a trivialization of their aesthetic interests, rather than as a source of identity value. In response, they employ demythologizing practices to insulate their acquired field-dependent social and cultural capital from devaluation. Our findings advance theorizations concerning marketplace myths and consumer identity work and explicate the sociocultural forces that deter consumers from abandoning a consumption field that has become culturally associated with undesirable meanings.



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**Aesthetic discrimination** = articulating subtle differences of why “they are doing it wrong” (high field status)

**Symbolic demarcation** = articulating subtle differences of why “I’m doing it differently” (lower field status)



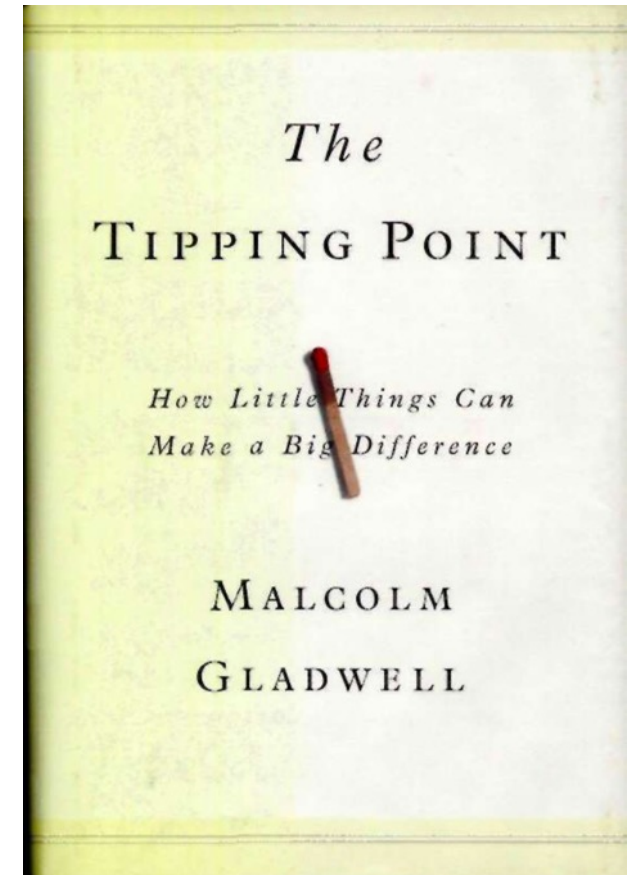
What does “selling out” mean?

It actually comes from subcultural research, meaning “selling out from the community”

Usually denotes that a brand, production, or style is seen as favoring “outsiders” over “insiders”

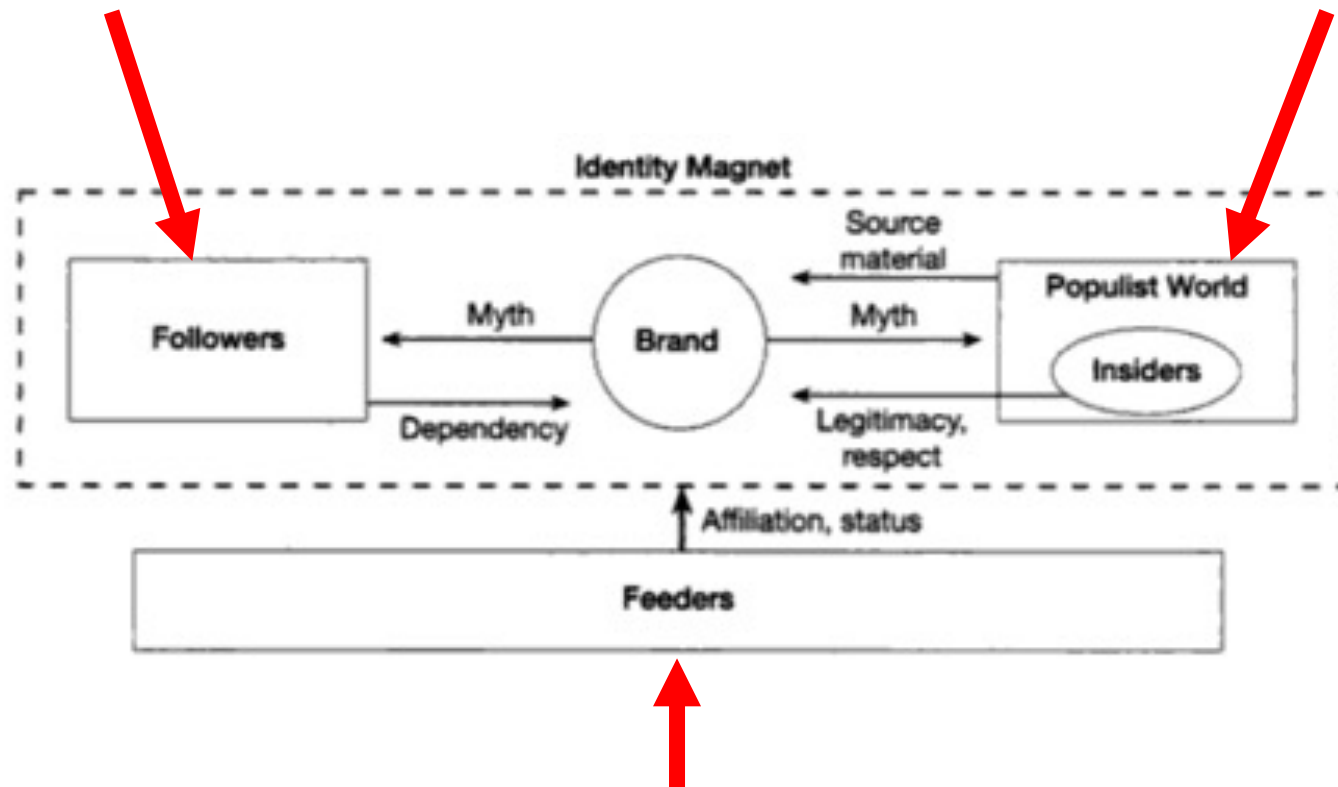


[CEO of Airwalk] “Cool brands treat people well, and we didn't. I had personally promised some of those little shops that we would give them special product, then we changed our minds. That was the beginning. In that world, it all works on word of mouth. When we became bigger, that's when we should have paid more attention to the details and kept a good buzz going, so when people said you guys are sellouts, you guys went mainstream, you suck, we could have said, you know what, we don't.”

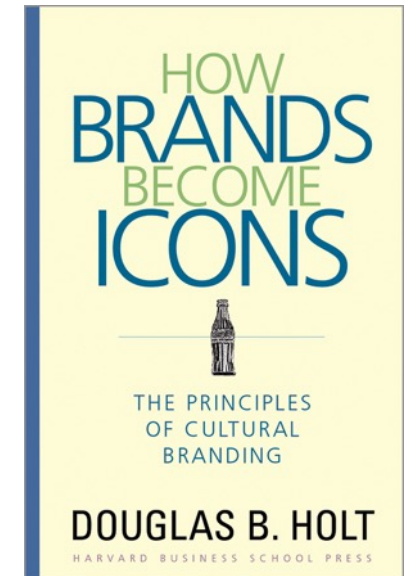


... (2) this will attract *followers* for the brand who curate or evangelize the brand...

(1) The *insiders*' attitude towards the brand or style depends on how well the brand/style is seen as representing or even championing the populist world and its ethos



... (3) and the rest will follow



How do these influence fashion?

*Subcultures*

*Subcultures of consumption*

*Brand communities*

*Tribes*



Subcultures

Subcultures of  
consumption

Brand  
communities

Tribes

Produce and legitimate  
styles by repurposing  
objects and meanings

Evangelize and legitimate  
brands

Entrepreneurial building of  
new brands, business  
models, styles etc.

How does social groups influence your fashion practices?

Can you identify a shared ethos, hierarchical structure and insider/outsider dynamic in a subculture you are in?

What role does fashion play in these subcultures, communities, or groups?