Beyond Acculturation: Multiculturalism and the Institutional Shaping of an Ethnic Consumer Subject

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Prior consumer research has investigated the consumer behavior, identity work, and sources of ethnic group conflict among various immigrants and indigenes. However, by continuing to focus on consumers' lived experiences, researchers lack theoretical clarity on the institutional shaping of these individuals as ethnic consumers, which has important implications for sustaining neocolonial power imbalances between colonized (immigrant-sending) and colonizing (immigrant-receiving) cultures. We bring sociological theories of neoliberal governmentality and multiculturalism to bear on an in-depth analysis of the contemporary Canadian marketplace to reveal our concept of market-mediated multiculturation, which we define as an institutional mechanism for attenuating ethnic group conflicts through which immigrant-receiving cultures fetishize strangers and their strangeness in their commodification of differences, and the existence of inequalities between ethnicities is occluded. Specifically, our findings unpack four interrelated consumer socialization strategies (envisioning, exemplifying, equipping, and embodying) through which institutional actors across different fields (politics, market research, retail, and consumption) shape an ethnic consumer subject. We conclude with a critical discussion of extant scholarship on consumer acculturation as being complicit in sustaining entrenched colonialist biases.

Keywords: ethnic consumer, acculturation, multiculturalism, neoliberalism, neocolonialism

> I love spending my time on Commercial Drive [street in Vancouver, Canada] since it's a good spot for multicultural food and culture. I particularly recommend Carthage Café for North African food. I also like both the old and new Chinatown and the Cambie Community Centre in Richmond [neighborhood in Vancouver, Canada] since it's a very multicultural spot for playing sports. [. . .] It is important to understand and learn about other cultures. This allows people to live together in the same area. From a personal point of view, I would say multiculturalism is a key factor in limiting racism and ethnic crises.
>
> —Emanuel, 27, Canadian citizen, born in Boudreaux, France

Emanuel's enthusiastic embrace of multiculturalism could be analyzed through the standard lens for theorizing the relationship between ethnicity and consumption. Previous consumer researchers have developed highly nuanced accounts of how consumption allows ethnic group conflicts to be negotiated through brand-mediated battles (Luedicke 2015, 2011), taste-based tensions (Üstüner and Holt 2007), consumer identity conflicts (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005), and various other consumer acculturation processes of compromising among

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different cultures through individual consumption choices (Askegaard and Özçaglar-Toulouse 2011; Chytkova 2011; Dion, Sitz, and Remy 2011; Hu, Whittler, and Tian 2013; Jafari and Goulding 2008; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994; Vihalemm and Keller 2011), where the ethnic positioning of the self is seemingly naturally anchored in consumer identity projects.

In this article, we depart from this traditional lens and adopt a more critical approach outlined by Ger et al. (2018). These authors have recently called on consumer culture researchers to articulate accounts of ethnicity, consumption, and the marketplace in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neocolonial power relations. From this perspective, Emanuel's celebration of multicultural consumption is not necessarily evidence of inherent openness, inclusion, and respect born out of equality; rather, his quote aptly illustrates the operation of a neocolonialist ideological system. This system renders the "other," and also makes the "other" understand him/herself, as commodified and exoticized (Cook and Harrison 2003)—compatible with the ideals of dominating races, genders, and classes—and, by perpetuating a Western neoliberal idyll of market-based inclusion and diversity, it obscures colonial hegemony and violence (Shohat 1992), thereby reproducing (rather than resolving) entrenched divides between "us" and the "stranger" (Ahmed 2000). Thus, rather than prioritizing the lived experiences of ethnic consumers, this article focuses on investigating how and why institutions have shaped an ethnic consumer subject, which we define herein as an immigrant or indigene who negotiates his/her cultural background(s) and engages with different ethnicities predominantly through individual consumption choices made in a multicultural marketplace.

Several consumer researchers have recently called for a shift in focus away from investigating individual consumer experiences to understanding the culturally contextualized consumer subject. This "context of context" (Askegaard and Linnet 2011) imperative is echoed in Karababa and Ger's (2011, 738) call for "more research [. . .] on the conceptualization of the consumer and the context in which such a subject is formed in order to better understand the relationship between consumer subjects and their environments," as well as in Giesler and Veresiu's (2014, 854) argument that researchers should "shift their analytical focus from asking how cultural value systems structure consumers' identities and experiences to asking how family, religion, ethnicity, activism, and other institutions are rearticulated as market and consumption systems."

To explore the creation of an ethnic consumer subject, we first turn to the sociology of governmentality. According to Foucault (1979/1991), governmentality represents a means of managing populations through which the shaping role of institutions (not just governments) and their associated ideologies operate. One such mode of governmentality utilized to manage ethnically diverse populations is that of neoliberal multiculturalism. According to political philosopher Will Kymlicka (2013, 109), "[t]he defining feature of neoliberal multiculturalism is the belief that ethnic identities and attachments can be assets to market actors and hence that they can legitimately be supported by the neoliberal state." Kymlicka (2013, 109) further notes that "the ultimate goal of neoliberalism is not just radical individualism, but rather the creation of subjects who govern themselves in accordance with the logic of globalized capitalism." In other words, multiculturalism from a neoliberal perspective represents an ideology that prescribes the coexistence of different ethnicities through individual consumption choice by connecting market competition with social inclusion. However, once projected upon, and internalized by, subjects, this form of multiculturalism (and the colonial gaze it fosters) also serves to fetishize the stranger and his/her strangeness and to reduce ethnicity to exoticized market categories, thereby reproducing and consolidating colonialist boundaries between "us" and "them" rather than destabilizing entrenched ethnic inequalities and Western dominance.

We build on the notion of neoliberal multiculturalism as a mode of governmentality to introduce the concepts of the ethnic consumer subject and market-mediated multiculturation. We define market-mediated multiculturation as an institutional mechanism for attenuating ethnic group conflicts through which immigrant-receiving cultures fetishize strangers and their strangeness in their commodification of differences, and the existence of inequalities between ethnicities is occluded. Specifically, our data analysis reveals that market-mediated multiculturation comprises four strategies hailing from institutional market actors across different domains, which we term envisioning, exemplifying, equipping, and embodying. The first strategy entails institutional actors from the political sphere envisioning the ethnic consumer subject as an ideal citizen type. A second prominent strategy involves actors from the market research realm exemplifying the ethnic consumer through data collection, analysis, reporting, and consulting. A third strategy deals with market actors from the retail realm equipping the multicultural marketplace with diverse ethnic products, services, and advertisements. A final strategy involves immigrants and indigenes in the consumption sphere embodying their prescribed ethnic consumer identity position by not only engaging with different ethnic market offerings, but also by encouraging others to do the same, as the opening consumer quote illustrates.

Importantly, akin to Cayla and Eckhardt's (2008, 217) research on brand managers' efforts to shape an Asian consumer subjectivity, our findings are also not determinist in that we equally "recognize consumers' ability to resist or ignore" these ethnic consumer socialization strategies. Hence, market-mediated multiculturation creates possible "horizons of conceivable action, feeling, and thought" (Arnould and Thompson 2005, 869) for immigrants and

indigenes alike. To better understand the formation of these horizons, we conducted an in-depth analysis of the contemporary Canadian marketplace. Canada was chosen as the context of study since it is regarded not only as the most multicultural nation in the world, but also as "the quintessential multicultural society in need of constant reinforcement and modification" (Fleras 2009, 57), owing to emerging ethnic group tensions among its very diverse population. Based on the latest National Household Survey (Statistics Canada 2011), more than 200 ethnicities exist in Canada, 13 of which have surpassed the one million people mark.

Based on our findings, we critically interrogate extant scholarship on consumer acculturation and elaborate on how market-mediated multiculturation sustains neocolonial power imbalances. In contrast to prior consumer acculturation studies, which have treated the linkage between ethnicity and consumption as a given (see Luedicke 2011, 2015 for overviews), we unpack how and why contemporary ethnic identification and group conflict management have become so centered on consumption and how, in the process, hegemony and neocolonial power relations become occluded. Overall, our study highlights not only how institutional market actors shift political engagement away from collective mobilization toward individual consumer choice, but also how these actors naturalize ethnic exoticness in the marketplace, thereby reproducing privilege, inequality, and domination.

THEORETICAL DEVELOPMENT

Prior consumer research has commonly conceptualized consumer acculturation as a microprocess of sociocultural adaptation to a new environment through which immigrants utilize available marketplace resources in an attempt to meaningfully (re)construct their ethnic (Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Peñaloza 1994; Üstüner and Holt 2007) or multicultural (Oswald 1999) identities. Recently, Luedicke (2015) moved beyond these immigrant-centric analyses by focusing on the interactions between immigrant and indigene consumers as manifested through ethnic consumer group conflicts—that is, interactive encounters of difference (Levy and Zaltman 1975)—in the marketplace. Accordingly, Luedicke's study (2015, 111) expands the consumer acculturation definition to include "phenomena that occur when consumers (immigrants or indigenes) adjust their established consumption practices, brand relationships, territorial claims, status hierarchies, and (collective) identities to their evolving relationships with consumers from unfamiliar national, social, or cultural backgrounds." What remains undertheorized, however, is why ethnic tensions and adjustments between indigene and immigrant groups are redirected to the market in the first place to be negotiated through consumer choices, practices, and identity projects and what hegemonies and inequalities are occluded in the process.

Outside of consumer research, the primary explanation for this shift is the widespread adoption of neoliberalism as a dominant way of organizing societies and managing economies (Foucault 1979/1991), which overall favors free-market competition, deregulation, privatization, optimization, and individual responsibilization (Bauman 2001; Bourdieu 1998; Chomsky 1999; Harvey 2005; Shamir 2008). At its core, neoliberalism is a form of governance that is completely compatible with capitalism, which valorizes individual (private) interests over collective (public) goals in an effort to maximize economic gains. Moreover, neoliberalism can be understood as a more broadly applied project in society that reconfigures subjectivity—people's sense of self and agency, as well as their identities and solidarities (Kymlicka 2013)—in market-economic terms by instilling a sense of self-reliance and self-governance in citizens. This creates an enterprising subject who valorizes consumption and choice when engaging with various social issues, ranging from the environment to education to health care (Giesler and Veresiu 2014; Yngfalk 2016; Zwick and Bradshaw 2016) and even ethnic group conflicts.

Ethnicity, on the other hand, has been commonly conceptualized by overview sociological studies (Barth 1969; Glazer, Moynihan, and Schelling 1975; Isajiw 1974) as a socially constructed cultural value system that legitimizes the clustering of collective interests over individual concerns in an effort to more fairly distribute resources among groups. Ethnicity can be understood as an important basis of personal identity, informal networks, social status, cultural meanings, shared history, and political mobilization (Kymlicka 2013). However, in order to sustain the smooth functioning of societies and economies, the enduring conflict between these two value systems has to somehow be reconciled. From a neoliberal perspective, "diversity in terms of race, ethnicities and nationalities has to be 'managed' for the market economy to function smoothly" (Banerjee and Linstead 2001, 688). Therefore, the prominent solution in neoliberal societies is to reenvision ethnicity or ethnic affiliations in accordance with the exigencies of capitalism.

Specifically, the ideology of multiculturalism has been reconceptualized as a mode of governing ethnic diversity that artificially connects market competition with social inclusion (Hale 2005; Hall 2000; Kymlicka 2013, 2015; McNeish 2008; Mitchell 2003; Žižek 1997). In this framing, diversity is reenvisioned as an economic asset or commodity to be used by market actors rather than as a liability hindering the economic performance of populations. Kymlicka (2015, 7) defines neoliberal multiculturalism or "Benetton multiculturalism" as "the equal right of all to market themselves and their culture, and to safely consume the cultural products of others, indifferent to issues of disadvantage. In short, inclusion without solidarity."

Neoliberal multiculturalism is thus a market-compatible ideology of ethnic coexistence and cohabitation that promises the reconciliation of tensions between the collective and the individual, as well as the immigrant and the indigene, by shifting political engagement away from the level of collective solidarity toward the level of individual market inclusion.

According to Kymlicka (2013, 109), "neoliberalism is fundamentally about creating effective market actors and competitive economies." He further elaborates that the aim of neoliberal multiculturalism is not to create a "tolerant national citizen who is concerned for the disadvantaged in her own society" but rather a "cosmopolitan market actor who can compete effectively" (Kymlicka 2013, 111). Consequently, the ubiquitous neoliberal emphasis on expanding the scope of the market comes at the cost of shrinking the scope of citizenship (Kymlicka 2013; Somers 2008). The ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism thus shapes an active ethnic consumer subject who embraces differences through the consumption of brands, products, services, and experiences, rather than engaging exclusively as a democratic citizen. Therefore, the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism is akin to Hall's (2000, 210) concept of commercial multiculturalism, which "assumes that if the diversity of individuals is recognized in the marketplace, then the problems of cultural difference will be dissolved through private consumption, without any need for a redistribution of power and resources," as well as Žižek's (1997, 28) contention that "multiculturalism emerged as the cultural logic of multinational capitalism."

In the current neoliberal era, ethnicity is no longer understood as a collective political means to express the demands of a group over social, cultural, racial, religious, and/or structural inequalities (Bell 1975). Today, the political demands of a group are increasingly expressed through ethnic consumer identity projects in the form of aesthetics, styles, and choices made in the marketplace (Ahmed 2000; Askegaard, Arnould, and Kjeldgaard 2005; Bouchet 1995; Firat 1995). Thus, contemporary identity politics has become an amalgamation of the political mobilization of ethnicity and its neoliberal multicultural character as a marketable good. Heath and Potter (2004), for example, have exposed this amalgamation for counterculture in general, which ethnicity is arguably one part of, by tracing the history of capitalism since the 1960s and describing it as absorbing much of the so-called counterculture and vice versa. According to the authors (Heath and Potter 2004, 7), "countercultural politics, far from being a revolutionary doctrine, has been one of the primary forces driving consumer capitalism for the past forty years." In a similar vein, Žižek (1997) also argues that contemporary identity politics, far from challenging colonial and market hegemony, actually serves to support it by removing the focal point of political action from systemic exploitation and inequality to minority rights and marketplace inclusion. As McNay (2010) observes, in the past identity politics tended to emphasize goals oriented toward recognition or redistribution. Today, however, identity politics concerns market recognition without resource redistribution.

The result of neoliberal multiculturalism is thus an ethnic consumer subject who negotiates his/her own cultural background(s) and engages with different ethnicities predominantly through individual consumption choices made in a multicultural marketplace, since "subjects are prone to the internalization of dominant norms of conduct in their social surroundings and self-government" (Yngfalk 2016, 279). A key implication of the mobilization of marketable ethnicity is that, although a sense of seemingly coexisting indigene and immigrant groups is created, at the same time, any inkling for social justice and systemic change is effaced. According to Kymlicka (2013, 112), neoliberal multiculturalism "affirms—even valorizes—ethnic immigrant entrepreneurship, strategic cosmopolitanism, and transnational commercial linkages and remittances but silences debates on economic redistribution, racial inequality, unemployment, economic restructuring, and labor rights." Hence, this ideology lends itself to naturalizing the exoticization of ethnicity in the marketplace by framing cultural differences as commodities for mainstream consumption, which helps sustain current neocolonial power relations of dominance and subordination (Ahmed 2000; Cook and Harrison 2003; Ger et al. 2018; Heldke 2001; Narayan 1995; Prasad 2003; Root 1996; Shohat 1992; Wilk 2006).

From a critical perspective, colonizing cultures (immigrant-receiving societies) fetishize strangers and their strangeness from colonized cultures (immigrant-sending societies) through the commodification and consumption of differences. However, the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism not only encourages immigrant groups to use their cultural markers as sources of market inclusion by producing and consuming commodified cultural products from their own ethnicity—such as fashion, food, furniture, and music—but also persuades indigene groups to feel comfortable and competent when interacting with immigrants in the workplace and marketplace by consuming a plethora of ethnic market offerings (Ahmed 2000; Cook and Harrison 2003; Ger et al. 2018; Kymlicka 2015).

However, ethnic consumer subjectivity is not a naturally occurring state of being. Rather, sustaining a society built on the principles of neoliberal multiculturalism entails coordinated efforts at different scales, and includes proactive governance among governments and firms to shift emerging ethnic group conflicts away from the realm of traditional politics to the realm of consumption. As Ger et al. (2018) have argued, in order for colonial hegemonies to be consolidated, the "stranger," who is no longer to be feared but rather someone whose differences need to be celebrated, must be tailored to changing social and economic conditions. To explore this process in greater detail, we

TABLE 1

TYPES OF DATA SOURCES

	Source	Description
Interview data	Market actor interviews	• Twenty-seven in-depth, semistructured interviews with Canadian politicians, market researchers, data analysts, strategists, consultants, advertising agents, brand managers, service providers, retailers, and entrepreneurs
	Consumer interviews	• Thirty in-depth, semistructured interviews with immigrant and indigene consumers living in Canada, (from six different continents, ages 16–75, 56% female, from all 10 Canadian provinces)
Institutional data	Canadian political debates and speeches	• Transcribed political debates in the Senate and the House of Commons • Speeches made by politicians, including prime ministers, governor generals, members of parliament, mayors, and more, from all parties
	Commissioned reports by the Canadian government	• National Census reports (conduced every five years by Statistics Canada) • Annual reports from Multiculturalism Canada • Office of Consumer Affairs reports • Statistical reports (e.g., Culture Statistics program)
	Canadian businesses	• Annual reports; press releases; consumer insight reports; marketing campaigns, photos, and videos pertaining to ethnic and/or multicultural+markets, marketing, consumers, goods, products, services, and/or experiences
	Industry events	• *Canadian Grocer*'s Ethnic Consumer Insights Conferences • *Marketing Magazine*'s Multicultural Marketing Conferences
	Canadian newspaper articles	• Five hundred fifteen articles, with the keyword search "Canada and/or Canadian+ethnic and/or multicultural+consumption, consumer, market, and/or marketing"

next investigate how the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism structures the contemporary Canadian marketplace.

METHODOLOGICAL OVERVIEW

Ever since Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau declared Canada an official multicultural nation in 1971, "[t]he ideology of multiculturalism has become part and parcel of Canadian identity" (Wayland 1997, 33). Furthermore, researchers contend that the presence of multicultural laws, values, and norms has played an important role in helping to normalize ethnic diversity and make it part of the Canadian national identity (Kazemipur 2009; Kymlicka 2013, 2015). However, with so many different minority groups in the mix, "the potential for unraveling Canada's social fabric along ethnic lines is always present" (Fleras 2009, 60). For instance, based on the latest National Census report, Asia was Canada's largest source of immigrants over the past five years (Statistics Canada 2011), making this context an inevitable focus of our study. Owing to the fact that the Asian continent houses a large variety of nations with long and contentious histories, it is unavoidable that tensions will arise when various Asian immigrants not only start living in close proximity to one another, but also bring their specific beliefs, customs, traditions, rituals, and values into their new environment. Hence, Canada's multicultural environment is constantly under threat of being pulled apart by various ethnic group conflicts, making it a useful context to study.

Data Collection

This study is composed of both interview and institutional data (see table 1). The lead author conducted 30 in-depth, semistructured interviews between 2011 and 2017 with immigrant and indigene consumers living in Canada. These informants were selected to represent a wide range of ethnic backgrounds (from six different continents), generations (ages 16–75), genders (56% female), and geographic locations (from all 10 Canadian provinces). The lead author also collected 27 interviews with Canadian politicians and practitioners (market researchers, data analysts, strategists, consultants, advertisers, brand managers, service providers, retailers, and entrepreneurs) during the same time period. All interviews were solicited either through industry conferences, cold calls, emails, or social media platforms. Interviews were conducted at informants' offices, coffee shops, and homes, as well as over Skype and telephone for informants outside of the province of Ontario, and lasted between 30 minutes and four hours. The interviews began with a broad set of questions and discussions pertaining to Canada's current politics, economy, society, and culture. This was followed by more specific questions and open-ended discussions on ethnic and multicultural consumption practices, and the different ethnic and multicultural goods, services, and experiences available in Canada. Participants were informed that the interview pertained to "a study about the contemporary Canadian marketplace" and were assured that their identity would remain confidential.

For the institutional component of our dataset, the lead author collected relevant online and offline Canadian

policy documents and government reports, as well as transcribed political debates and speeches. Relevant consumer insight reports, market research studies, industry studies, media articles, and consulting firms' publications were also gathered. Companies' strategy documents and marketing campaigns (including a variety of print, online, and televised ads) on ethnic and/or multicultural brands, products, and services were collected. Finally, the lead author attended practitioners' conferences on the topics of ethnic and/or multicultural marketing, where field notes were taken and interviews with potential informants were solicited. In accordance with the established principles of qualitative research (Glaser and Strauss 1967), data collection continued until theoretical saturation was reached.

Data Analysis

We analyzed both the interview and institutional datasets using a hermeneutic approach (Thompson 1997), which consisted of tacking back and forth between each data point, potential explanatory theories, and the two authors' theoretical interpretations until dominant themes crystallized. Culminating from this analysis mode are four prominent institutional strategies of consumer socialization that together lead to the creation of an ethnic consumer subject. Similar to Cayla and Eckhardt's (2008, 219) study, working across the different data sources allowed us to "develop thick descriptions" of ethnic consumer subject formation and "check our emerging interpretations." Next, we outline our findings of the four interrelated consumer socialization strategies, which we term envisioning, exemplifying, equipping, and embodying, using interview excerpts, archival data, and field notes from marketing practitioner events.

CANADIAN MARKETPLACE ANALYSIS

Envisioning the Ethnic Consumer in the Political Realm

The contemporary Canadian government is challenged to manage more ethnic group conflicts between indigene and immigrant groups that stem from heightened global population mobility. These tensions arise at different times across the country among indigenes deriving from English settlers, French settlers, or Aboriginal Canadians and a wide variety of immigrant diasporas from all continents (Fleras 2009). In an attempt to proactively prevent ethnic group conflicts from forming, we find that Canadian politicians (re)envision what it means to be a Canadian citizen via the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism. We refer to this consumer socialization strategy as envisioning the ethnic consumer subject.

Through their parliamentary debates, public speeches, media interviews, community engagements, and new statutes, institutional actors from all political affiliations attempt to shift ethnic group conflicts and citizens' political engagement away from traditional collective mobilization toward individual consumer participation. Canadian politicians encourage all citizens, be they immigrants or indigenes, to engage in the consumption of a plethora of ethnic market offerings that form Canada's multicultural marketplace. This strategy redefines the terms of belonging and citizenship as being market-based and consumer-centric. According to the neoliberal ideology of multiculturalism, this is done in an effort to achieve the twin goals of market competition and social inclusion. Consider, as a case in point, the following parliamentary debate from 2016 among members of Canada's top three political parties (Liberal, Conservative, and New Democratic) on Motion No. 38, which called for the Canadian federal government to officially accept and annually announce the start of the Asian Lunar Year (commonly known as the Chinese New Year) as a national celebration.

> Luke, Liberal Member of Parliament (MP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak today on Motion No. 38 [which enforces the Canadian government to proclaim the start of the Asian Lunar Year, each year]. Many customs accompany the spring festival. People do a major spring cleaning of their houses, their clothes, and their utensils. A number of goods are purchased for the new year, including edible oil, rice, flour, chicken, duck, fish, meat, fruit, candies, and nuts. Children receive new clothes, shoes, and red packets with good luck money, and they exchange gifts with seniors, friends, and relatives. There are fireworks, a dragon dance, kitchen gods, the beating of drums and cymbals, and many celebrations. Chinese eat noodles and dumplings called *jiaozi* to signify a long life and the end and the beginning of time [. . .] Canada is a multicultural society, whose ethnocultural makeup has been shaped over time by immigrants and their descendants. It is, therefore, not surprising that Asian traditions, such as the spring festival, are celebrated by an increasing number of people in Canada every year. [. . .] Multiculturalism makes life better for all Canadians and helps to build strong, diverse communities. Many Canadians are interested in learning about Asia, but do not have the opportunity to travel outside of Canada. The spring festival is a fun way to learn more about Asian customs and family traditions from within Canada. Here we can bring this tradition into focus and have the community serving together, enjoying the day and the time with the greater community. This fits with the spirit of multiculturalism. [. . .] Mr. Speaker, indeed, spring festivals and other ethnic group celebrations have been in Canada for many years. [. . .] During that time of year, we can see it everywhere. We can see it in shops, in gas stations, in department stores, and in restaurants. All have signs of the celebration for the spring festival. As I said in my speech, this is good for Canada because diversity is our strength, not our weakness. [. . .]

> Claire, Conservative MP: I realize that, as a multicultural mosaic, sometimes our different colors, origins, and traditions may appear to clash. Even within my riding of Richmond Centre [electoral district located in British Columbia], there is now some tension between the more established residents and the newer members of our immigrant community. Some people may ask, if we pass this motion, where we would then draw the line. Are we to recognize every cultural tradition that is celebrated by some members of Canadian society? I would have to disagree with those individuals. There is a belief out there that somehow motions like this one may dilute our Canadian identity. To them I say that, rather than diluting what it means to be Canadian, we are keeping the finest traditions of the Canadian spirit instead. [. . .]

> Phil, New Democratic Party MP: It is not surprising that the [Chinese New Year] parade draws over 100,000 spectators representing every single ethnic group in this country along the route each year, plus many more who see it through TV coverage. It gives me great opportunity to highlight for the House the incredible contributions of Chinese Canadians to Canada's social, economic, and cultural heritage. [. . .]

Through their speeches, the three Members of Parliament not only encouraged cultural pluralism and social inclusion by way of the market, but also managed to tie Canada's population diversity to the smooth functioning of the Canadian economy. Their debate was met with majority approval, which means that every year going forward Canada's prime minister (along with other politicians) will participate in the ethnic festival's numerous consumption activities throughout the country while encouraging Canadian citizens to do the same. At first glance this may seem like an empty political gesture, but it is actually a significant move. These market-mediated public gestures set a great example by doing of what it means to be a true Canadian: a consumer first and foremost, who not only is woven into the Canadian social fabric through the market, but also learns about, and ultimately accepts, different cultures by making a variety of individual consumption choices.

The above debate therefore illustrates how the neoliberal ideology of multiculturalism motivates politicians to shape an ethnic consumer subjectivity as the unifying "Canadian identity" that helps to smooth "some tension between the more established residents and the newer members of our immigrant community," as the Conservative MP Claire contends. However, the government's enthusiastic declaration of the Chinese New Year as a national consumption celebration not only reinforces the idea of an inclusive, multicultural Canada, it also sustains a colonial gaze (Said 1978) by shaping a racialized Asian "other" (Hu et al. 2013): a consumable and consuming ethnic subject that is understood exotically and selectively through Chinese lanterns, dumplings, dragon dances, and mandarin-collar blouses. Difference thus becomes a consumption style, thereby occluding forms of ethnic antagonism and violence (Ahmed 2000).

Despite this critical aspect, our political informants consistently echoed Luke, Claire, and Phil in their consumer socialization efforts to convince Canadian citizens that the ideal form of intergroup interaction is a market-based one. Along these lines, consider another 2016 political debate among oppositional Members of Parliament over Motion No. 24, which requested that the government declare January of each year as Tamil Heritage Month, akin to February's Black History Month:

> Mitchell, Liberal MP: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of my private member's motion, Motion No. 24, Tamil Heritage Month, celebrating the contributions of Tamil Canadians in our country. Canada is truly enriched by the Tamil language, culture, and history. Multiculturalism is indigenous to Canada. [. . .]

> Cameron, Conservative MP: Mr. Speaker, food is always the icebreaker. I have about five million Tamil restaurants in my riding, from Babu Catering to many others. Can the member provide more information to the public regarding Tamil food and what people should be expecting and looking for when they go to Tamil restaurants?

> Mitchell, Liberal MP: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend for seconding this motion. Certainly, we share a lot of restaurants. The first thing I would recommend is to make sure the restaurant is properly ventilated, that there is sufficient air conditioning on a very warm day, and that there is lots of water. It is one aspect of the culture. For example, Tamil Fest this year in Toronto, as it was last year, will be one of the showcase events where the food and culture will come together. [. . .]

In their speeches, both MPs advocated for the neoliberal ideology of multiculturalism in encouraging not only the indigene population to learn about Tamil culture, but also Tamil immigrants to express their "language, culture, and history" through market-mediated interactions, such as attending and organizing ethnic festivals and restaurants, once again perpetuating a colonial gaze. Nevertheless, this motion also passed with majority approval from all political parties. As a proud member of the Tamil diaspora, Mitchell took it upon himself to educate indigenes on how to best consume his culture's spicy dishes. He thereby not only fetishizes his own ethnicity in Canada, but also enforces the otherness of the Tamil group by presenting it as an exciting product category and therefore individual consumption choice. Hence, in this political debate, the colonized/exoticized comes to understand him/herself in ways that are compatible with what Wilk (1995) has termed the "replication of diversity." Rather than approaching the difference between Canadian and Tamil culture politically, Mitchell reduces this difference to a consumption style, and becomes complicit in his self-production as a commodity.

Politicians' public encouragement of and engagement in ethnic consumption practices extends far beyond national-level festivities (e.g., Chinese New Year and Tamil Heritage Month) to also include local-level community consumption events. Consider, for example, the following enthusiastic public speeches from a Conservative and a Liberal MP on two separate occasions:

> Alex, Conservative MP: For the past seven years, the Passport to Unity Festival has had a direct impact in creating Sault Ste. Marie's cultural mosaic. This year [2013], the festival touched nearly 5,000 people in just three days, setting the stage to learn and embrace the ever-growing multiculturalism that is present in our northern Ontario city. Through various entertainment acts, dance, and food exhibitions, my constituents were able to celebrate their ethnicity and values, while being united with other Canadians of different race, religion, and creed. I am proud to represent a riding that embraces cultural participation. Special appreciation goes out to all participants, volunteers, and our community for making Sault Ste. Marie's signature multiculturalism festival possible.

> Manny, Liberal MP: This year [2016] marks the 30th anniversary of the [Guelph Multicultural] festival, and I am proud to say that our diversity has only increased since the festival began. Guelphites from a variety of backgrounds from around the world will come together to share food, music, fashion, and good company. It is cross-cultural events like these that demonstrate not only how diverse the community is, but also how Guelph lives up to Canadian values such as acceptance, understanding, and inclusion.

These politicians' remarks help shape the prototypical citizen as an ethnic consumer by explicitly endorsing how "[i]n this diversity of identities, consumption is the common denominator" (Banerjee and Linstead 2001, 701). By promoting long-running multicultural consumption events as prima facie evidence of citizens and communities upholding "the Canadian values of acceptance, understanding, and inclusion," our informants implicitly diminish other forms of championing the rights of minority groups. Moreover, we are led to believe that ethnic group conflicts, if they ever occur, are best managed through spirited market-mediated competitions over which ethnic group hosts the better festivals, plays the best music, cooks the most delicious food, and designs the most stylish fashion, rather than debates over power imbalances, racial inequalities, and resource distribution issues.

Overall, politicians hailing from oppositional parties like the Liberals Luke, Mitchell, and Manny; the Conservatives Claire, Cameron, and Alex; as well as the New Democrat Phil, among many others, collectively envision and delineate the ideal Canadian citizen as an active ethnic consumer subject. This citizen type is encouraged to negotiate his/her own ethnicity and embrace cultural diversity by making a variety of ethnic or directly termed multicultural consumption choices. Canadian politicians therefore promote a sense of social inclusion and encourage market competition by connecting Canada's growing population diversity with the smooth functioning of the nation's economy. However, this strategy helps commodify minority groups and renders the racialized otherness of citizens through the consumption of cultural differences, thereby actively reinforcing (rather than destabilizing) entrenched distinctions between the colonizing, mainstream Canadian "us" and the colonized, minority Canadian "other."

Exemplifying the Ethnic Consumer in the Market Research Realm

Politicians' speeches, initiatives, and mandates place the ethnic consumer subject on the national agenda. However, this definition of the ideal citizen continues to compete with other viewpoints. Further institutional work is therefore required in order to render Canadian politicians' proposed ethnic consumer vision as verifiable, and thus legitimate. Accordingly, we identify a second consumer socialization strategy, which we term exemplifying the ethnic consumer subject. This involves institutional actors from the market research field (e.g., market analysts, strategists, and consultants) creating measures and scales, collecting and analyzing market and consumer-level data, presenting their findings at industry events, disseminating their knowledge online, and publishing commissioned reports. All these activities are done in an effort to empirically substantiate *who* the ethnic consumer actually is, thereby helping to legitimize this type of consumer subjectivity over other competing identity projects. Consider next how government bodies, such as Canada's Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA), initiate this strategy by encouraging studies on immigrants as ethnic consumers, as exemplified in the following excerpt:

> Immigrants and visible minorities are ever more present in Canada's population. Cultural differences influence demand and hence contribute to a more diversified marketplace, to the benefit of all Canadian consumers. [. . .] Another important characteristic is the increasing proportion of recent immigrants from Asia. This in turn has increased the number of Canadians identifying themselves as visible minorities, from 5 percent of the total population in 1981 to 13 percent in 2001 (Figure 3.7), and this is projected to rise to 20 percent by 2016. [. . .] Cultural differences are indeed an increasingly important factor in the broader context of research in consumer matters. [. . .] As the foreign-born population in Canada continues to increase, it will be important for consumer research to consider how the Canadian marketplace changes and to identify consumer challenges for this demographic group. (Consumer Trends Report, Office of Consumer Affairs, 2011)

Through its reports, the OCA, among other Canadian government agencies, resolves any sense of contradiction between the goal of social inclusion and that of market competition. Conducting extensive market research on different ethnic consumer segments, we are led to believe, is key not only to helping the national economy, but also to fostering a more inclusive Canadian society. Furthermore, the OCA's official mandate to "promote the interests and protection of Canadian consumers" because "[w]ell-informed and confident consumers help stimulate competition and innovation in the Canadian marketplace" (http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/oca-bc.nsf/eng/ca00038.html) directly maps onto the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism as a dominant mode of governing ethnic diversity. Accordingly, institutional actors classify citizens through official documents as self-governing ethnic consumers serving competitive market interests rather than as legal or civic subjects with rights and responsibilities.

In direct response, countless market research and consulting companies operating within Canada began investigating and identifying different facets of the ethnic consumer. For instance, in 2011, the NDP Group published a widely circulated report entitled "Eating Patterns Among Canada's Population Groups." According to Jay, a data analyst working for the company's Canadian division, the scope of this study was to "provide key market implications and new business opportunities by investigating the home and restaurant eating habits, and the grocery shopping patterns, of Canadians segmented based on ethnic groups." Classifying the food consumption choices, habits, and patterns of ethnic others is a significant move, since food is a central field through which the colonial gaze is both projected upon and internalized. Hence, this market category is a powerful class signifier and governmentality tool used to denote belonging versus exclusion (Mintz 1985).

It is also "indicative of inequality at play" (Ger et al. 2018) in that it includes certain ethnic group segments in the study, therefore valorizing these strangers over others. For instance, due to the influx of Asian immigrants, a large portion of Jay's work was dedicated to unpacking this group's strange consumer behavior, which he defines as "Chinese; South Asian, which are East Indians, Pakistani, Sri Lankan, etc.; East Asian, which are Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian, Vietnamese, etc.; and Other Asians." By clustering different Asian nationalities together, our informant echoes Cayla and Eckhardt's (2008, 217) finding that market actors shape "a transnational Asian subjectivity." More importantly, Jay's report, among numerous others we analyzed, also extends Cayla and Eckhardt's (2008) conceptualization in a more critical direction by codifying racialized otherness, thereby helping legitimize it as a standard industry practice. Our interviewed market research practitioners further broaden the consumer subjectivity definition to include both immigrants and indigenes, as summarized in the following excerpt:

> Evolving demographic composition based on ethnicity is one of the leading trends in Canada. Much of the immigration into Canada is coming from Asia. This is a very diverse group [. . .] but an understanding of commonalities in eating patterns among the Asian population in Canada may provide potential business opportunities. Mainly, business opportunities may be created in two different areas. Understanding their main behaviors will enable agrifood business to communicate to Asians [in ways] that resonate and address their needs through advertising and media strategies, packaging sizes, and pricing promotions. Understanding their eating patterns will help to spread new culinary experiences to established Canadians. (Eating Patterns in Canada, NDP Group, 2011)

This study is structured by the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism, since it not only highlights how Canada's economy stands to gain from understanding immigrants' consumer habits, but also stresses how indigene consumers will benefit from embracing foreigners' consumption practices. In this case, we observe a form of "food colonialism" at play (Heldke 2001) where indigenes can affirm their power over the "other" through intimate food choices and "culinary experiences" without necessarily showing interest in, or concern for, the origins of the food or its people. Immigrants, on the other hand, are rendered as test subjects, whose strange consumer behavior should continue to be probed, analyzed, and decoded.

Jay's study and remarks therefore directly map onto the idea of the colonialist gaze, since "native bodies and cultural artifacts have long been coveted as collectibles to be placed under the Western gaze—a gaze which, under the guise of science, systematically objectified and dehumanized them" (Prasad 2003, 163). Furthermore, by not only measuring the different consumption patterns of ethnic groups, but also actively shaping this type of consumer subjectivity through specific surveying techniques, our informants emphasize the ethnic consumer subject, while simultaneously downplaying the immigrant as a civic subject. Consider as a typical illustration Gloria's (market analyst) depiction of her company's proprietary ethnic segmentation system:

> We offer the most comprehensive geographic and demographic consumer data available on Canada's multicultural population. By using our unique market intelligence platform, businesses can analyze and develop strategies based on information we provide them regarding cultural shifts, population concentrations, spending trends, acculturation, and marketplace behavior. [. . .] We are the only ones in Canada to offer clients access to our Asianicity CultureCode. This is our trademarked segmentation system that includes five acculturation levels that define the extent to which the Chinese and South Asian populations in any

> geography have adopted Canadian culture and languages. [. . .] Our system defines the acculturation groups as follows: the Newcomers, born in India/Pakistan or China/Hong Kong, and having immigrated within the past five years, they tend to speak their mother tongue at home and identify with their homeland; the Traditionalists, born in either India/Pakistan/Sri Lanka or China/Hong Kong, and having immigrated more than 15 years ago, they still tend to speak their mother tongue at home and identify with their homeland; the Bi-Culturals, born in India or China and having immigrated within the past 15 years, they speak their mother tongue or English at home, and identify with their homeland and Canada; the Fusions, born in Canada from parents who immigrated more than 15 years ago, they tend to speak English at home (for the Fusions, while South Asians identify with their homeland and Canada, Chinese populations are more likely to identify with Canada); and the NextGens, born in Canada, they tend to speak English at home and identify with Canada and their homeland. [. . .] Digging deeper allows my colleagues and I to focus on the niche demographics of diversity within the diversity found in Canada.

Gloria and her colleagues are bringing the ethnic consumer subject to life through the trademarked "Asianicity CultureCode," which encompasses five possible combinations of home and host cultures. Thus, Gloria's narrative is ideologically structured by the principles of neoliberal multiculturalism, especially when she equates her clients' economic success with immigrants' marketplace inclusion through the use of her company's market intelligence platform. Gloria and her team are equally exhibiting colonialist tendencies by choosing to exoticize and commodify certain ethnic groups and not others. Moreover, by creating segmentation tools that categorize ethnic individuals commercially, market researchers help shift the focus away from other types of classifications, such as more civically oriented ones. This neoliberal multicultural mindset is further encapsulated in the following conversation with the cofounders of a Toronto-based multicultural marketing agency during its grand opening ceremony on Canada Day in 2013:

> Morgan: What happens today is we're all reading the same statistics and have access to the same data. We know the rate at which new immigrants are arriving in this country, but what a lot of corporate Canada doesn't necessarily have a lot of expertise in is making sense of the data and actually putting it into the action. [. . .] Multicultural marketing represents a growth opportunity, not a challenge, for Canadian marketers. We're here to develop the category and awareness of why corporate Canada needs to look at ethnic consumers as customers that have unique needs.

> Peter: Canada's booming multicultural reality demands a new approach. Conventional multicultural marketing is outdated. It's time to reject the lazy translations of existing programs, the ones that ignore the diversity within the diversity. No longer is it enough to merely add an ethnic face or adapt a mainstream campaign using cliché imagery. [. . .] One challenge is that consumer data for ethnic markets is hard to come by. Large sections of multicultural markets are simply not tracked by standard research measuring tools. So to unlock the intelligence within ethnic markets, we established our own methodology for research and insights. Our proprietary process uncovers culturally relevant insights. We take the time by investing our own resources to better understand the points of view of ethnic consumers.

Both market researchers' remarks not only exemplify Canada's ideal citizen as an ethnic consumer subject, but also perpetuate a banalized understanding of ethnicity as a commodity or market asset to be exploited. Morgan and Peter's passionate descriptions of their proprietary market research tools assist in shaping a knowledge creation industry, worth over $800 million (https://www.ibisworld.ca/industry/market-research.html), which equates ethnicity with consumption while concurrently disqualifying that ethnicity is something to be measured through other methods, such as social redistribution scales.

As a final step to help legitimize the ethnic consumer subject as a prominent form of identity politics, we find that our interviewed practitioners disseminate their knowledge at recurring industry events. From our field notes, our market researchers' PowerPoint presentations include titles exemplifying a colonialist gaze, such as "Ethnic Opportunity—If Only I Knew," "Understanding the Ethnic Consumer," and "Ethnic Male Millennials are Unique," which were presented at the *Canadian Grocer*'s Ethnic Insights Conference and the Ethnic Consumer Marketing Conference. At these events, market actors across all institutions collaborate to shape the ethnic consumer subject as a resource for sustaining Canada's social unity and economic prosperity. In summary, by measuring, categorizing, and segmenting the ethnic consumer—in other words, by creating it as an object of market knowledge—market researchers like Jay, Gloria, Morgan, and Peter substantiate that ethnic group demands can be reconciled through marketplace inclusion, thereby not only making ethnicity something that is accessible to indigene Canadians through consumption, but also rendering the non-mainstream "other" as an object of knowledge to be researched, understood, and commodified (Ahmed 2000).

Equipping the Ethnic Consumer in the Retail Realm

Politicians place the ethnic consumer subject on the national agenda, and market researchers empirically mold this citizen type through data collection and analysis. However, in order for individuals to be able to express their ethnic consumer subjectivity in the manner prescribed, more institutional work is needed to create a

concrete market infrastructure around this consumer. We refer to this third strategy as equipping—the provisioning of ethnic goods, services, and experiences by brand managers and retailers. Specifically, these practitioners create brand extensions for ethnic segments, stock shelves with a large assortment of imported and locally sourced ethnic products, as well as design commercial spaces, services, and advertising campaigns around ethnic consumer experiences. Overall, their combined efforts equip Canada's multicultural marketplace with resources citizens can use to become ethnic consumer subjects.

In particular, retailers are incentivized by market researchers' reports to develop and supply market offerings that make adopting an ethnic consumer subjectivity, and its associated choice-making capabilities, both possible and desirable. A typical illustration of this occurrence is the following quote from Barney, the chief executive officer of a national real estate agency, who recruited the services of one of our dataset's market research firms to help his company remain competitive:

> [Market research firm's] deep understanding of the rapidly changing demographic in Canada woke us up to the corresponding marketing obligation we have. [. . .] A home is one of the biggest purchases any Canadian will make, and offering cultural understanding ensures a more inclusive buying process for everyone. [. . .] For example, we found that first-generation South Asian Canadians often have very traditional methods of cohabitation. Members of this community often have strong ties to their families, with multiple generations living in the same home. This explains why the real estate search may be concentrated on the suburbs. City homes simply do not offer enough space. Having a spacious, well-lit, modern kitchen will be a huge selling point for this group, and a large backyard also means extra space for entertaining and plenty of room for a grill. [. . .] A common factor of importance for Chinese-Canadian homebuyers centers on the house being compatible with the system of feng shui, which relates to the flow of energy. Many Chinese consumers will look for south-facing homes, an unblocked main entrance, and long hallways, but T-shaped intersections or stairs that lead right out the front door may be avoided. [. . .] The Muslim homebuyer is another demographic that holds specific traditions and beliefs. A display of wealth and extravagance is often frowned upon, so simpler homes may be of interest. Privacy is also a major concern and homes that have distinct separate rooms are preferred. [. . .] It is also common for members of the Muslim community to not believe in paying or receiving interest, which is why many will find alternative financing options."

Barney's comments illustrate that, inasmuch as institutional actors socialize individuals into becoming ethnic consumers, they are themselves also socialized into this system by feeling encouraged or obliged to alter their products depending on their customers' ethnic affiliation. This market practice not only financially benefits Barney's real estate company, but also makes immigrants, as well as first- and second-generation Canadian consumers who may be more attached to some of their ethnicities' living habits, feel important and included in Canada through the market. Hence, our retail sphere informants not only execute the third strategy of equipping to ensure the success of their businesses, but also, from their colonizing standpoint, believe that it helps safeguard the social inclusion of different ethnic groups, especially newcomers to Canada. Consider, for instance, the following quote from Jeremy, an entrepreneur who launched his company in 2013:

> Arriving to begin life in Canada is a memorable moment, full of excitement, hopes, and dreams. As immigrants ourselves, we [my employees and I], understand the excitement, the challenges, and the journey of discovery. This is the starting point of the WelcomePack program, a welcome gift pack that is also a memory box, for all the memories of new immigrants' arrival, and the moments of discovery in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead. [. . .] The WelcomePack brings together leading Canadian brands in categories like banking, telecommunications, automobiles, restaurants, real estate, consumer products, media, and entertainment to extend a special and memorable welcome to new Canadian immigrants. [. . .] But we're very selective with the brands we choose; we want them to be leading brands in their category because we're recommending them to new immigrants. [. . .] Canada's marketing scene has become quite multicultural. We welcome over a quarter-million new immigrants every year. Every brand wants to establish a new relationship with them and have that first-move advantage because you remember the first brands you're welcomed by.

Jeremy's account harbors several meanings drawn from the neoliberal ideology of multiculturalism. He has established his entity as a welcoming entry point for immigrants to more easily navigate their new environment through individual consumption. Accordingly, he is explicitly socializing newcomers as ethnic consumer subjects in Canada's multicultural marketplace by offering them free samples of popular consumer packaged goods (e.g., cleaning products, toiletries, pantry items) from leading partner brands, including Carnation, Dove, Kellogg's, Knorr, Pringles, and Smuckers, to name but a few. Under the clever guise of gift giving, Jeremy is also socializing new immigrants into becoming active ethnic consumers in the services landscape by gifting them coupons and other offers for specific real estate (Tridel), banking (RBC, H&R Block), automotive (Ford), and telecommunications (Rogers Communications) companies.

Similar to our other informants, this entrepreneur takes into consideration the recent influx of Asian immigrants, thereby valorizing this group above others, and gifts them targeted deals to local Asian-focused fashion malls (Pacific Mall) and grocery stores (TFI Foods Supermarket), as well

as free samples of Asian consumer packaged goods from brands such as Amoy (Hong Kong), OxHead (Thailand), and IMEI (Taiwan). Jeremy's consumer socialization strategy has become quite popular since, according to him, "WelcomePack Canada has already distributed gift boxes to over 60,000 Canadian immigrants." The 32 participating brands, in turn, pay his company different fees to be included in the gift packages. Hence, Jeremy positions his company as an obligatory passage point for brands to reach one important constituent of the ethnic consumer subject: new immigrants.

Another key avenue to socialize citizens into the ethnic consumer mindset is the supermarket. Market researchers estimate that over the next decade, more than 70% of the growth in Canadian consumer spending will come from visible minorities, which they translate to $12 billion additional grocery store sales (Condon 2013). As a consequence, the third consumer socialization strategy is adopted by both small independent stores, of which there are over 800 ethnic ones across Canada (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada 2012), and national supermarket chains. These larger retailers target different ethnic segments through specific stores and advertisements in their portfolio. A typical illustration of this strategy can be found in the following quote from Ted, a brand-marketing specialist working at Canada's largest food and household goods retailer, which encompasses over 1,000 supermarkets nationwide operating under 22 unique brand names:

> We at the Loblaw family [Loblaw Companies Limited] understand that generational differences call for different ad strategies. The newcomer requires different treatment from the established family or the Canadian-born children of immigrants. For example, our No Frills [deep discount national supermarket chain] television ads are targeted at newcomers and highlight cost saving. So, both the South Asian and Chinese commercials have the same storyline: a family sits at the kitchen table trying to balance their budget before heading to No Frills. But the visible-minority Loblaws customer is a different breed. You go to Loblaws [higher-end supermarket chain] because you've matured into almost a mainstream person. So, for example, in a Chinese commercial, a middle-class family heads to the Real Canadian Superstore [another supermarket chain owned by Loblaw Cos. Ltd.] to pick up groceries to impress a relative visiting from Hong Kong.

Through his targeted advertising, Ted is directly educating immigrants on how to successfully navigate the Canadian consumer landscape. Moreover, this strategy shifts ethnic engagement away from public spaces, such as squares and town halls, directly into private spaces, such as supermarkets and malls. By moving ethnic engagement to private spaces, retailers help efface noncommercial ways of managing ethnic diversity. Furthermore, our interviewed retailers also involve indigene shoppers in their advertising and store layout decisions. For instance, we consistently find that they deliberately place their ethnic offerings in classic product category aisles (e.g., frozen foods, drinks, spices), mixing them with North American and global brands. This falls in line with the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism by appearing to smooth out cultural differences through the incorporation of ethnic taste palates and preferences directly on Canadian supermarket shelves.

Retailers have also succeeded in equipping the ethnic consumer subject through their market offerings outside of the popular food category, as well as across all points on the socioeconomic servicescape spectrum. Consider, for example, our conversations with Haley (director of program marketing and communications at a department store) and Mindy (store manager of a thrift shop):

> Haley: HBC [The Hudson's Bay Company] customers and sales associates told us they wanted to see more products that appeal to various ethnic communities across the country, so we're testing a variety of products at various stores. [. . .] Since 2006, HBC has targeted Asian communities, Jewish communities, and East Indian communities in various locations across the country. [. . .] We focused on areas where our customers had requested certain programs or products and where we knew we had customers of a particular ethnic background shopping in our stores. For example, customers and sales associates both said they wanted to see more products that would appeal to the South Asian communities in Brampton and Bramalea. As a result, a variety of products in the entertainment, apparel, and accessories categories are being tested. [. . .] HBC has also added additional associates who speak languages that are relevant to the various communities as requested by the customers.

> Mindy: We recently created a dedicated ethnic wear section at this Salvation Army Thrift Store location. [. . .] It consists of clothes such as saris, shalwar, kameez, kurtas, lehngas, and dupattas [South Asian clothing items] donated through various multicultural clothing drives. [. . .] We welcome these generous donations that will go a long way in not only positively impacting this community through the Salvation Army services, but that will also assist our neighbors in need of ethnic wear. [. . .] In the very short time that the pieces have been on our store floor, we have received a lot of positive feedback and seen considerable movement. We always encourage others to donate their gently used ethnic clothing, furniture, and household items with us!

By being mindful of the ethnic makeup of their customer base, both servicescape managers are fostering social inclusion through typical market mechanisms rather than other means. Overall, the market offerings, advertisements, and store layouts of our retail informants provide a concrete template for Canadians on how to be ethnic consumers. Through their servicescape strategies, Barney, Jeremy, Ted, Haley, and Mindy, among our other interviewees, do not simply integrate "the stranger" into the Canadian

marketplace. By providing exotic objects and controlling their circulation (Altglas 2014), these practitioners provide a marketplace landscape that systematically fetishizes "the stranger" (Ahmed 2000) and reproduces colonial hegemony. On the one hand, they enable Canadians to treat the exotic "other" as an avenue for displaying cultural capital through a cosmopolitan commitment to openness and diversity. On the other hand, they equip the stranger or minority with a specific selection of "authentic" resources for ethnic identity play and self-commodification.

Embodying the Ethnic Consumer in the Consumption Sphere

The previous three strategies of envisioning, exemplifying, and equipping not only inscribe the proposed ethnic consumer subject into a market apparatus, but together they also systematically discourage other ethnic subjectivities from surfacing and materializing. However, in order for these strategies to work, immigrants and indigenes must adopt their ascribed roles as ethnic consumers. We refer to this final strategy as embodying. Here, individuals have internalized the intended belief that the most sensible way to deal with cultural differences is to make multiple ethnic or multicultural consumption choices.

Inasmuch as market actors from the retail realm directly influence, and therefore socialize, our interviewed consumers into Canada's multicultural marketplace, so do consumers themselves as neighbors, friends, and family members. Importantly, however, this strategy works differently for immigrants and indigenes. Most notably for indigenes, embodying an ethnic consumer subjectivity becomes a status game for displaying one's cultural capital and cosmopolitan outlook, whereas for immigrants, internalizing this subjectivity is not only a means to acculturate to a new environment, but also a way to self-commodify their own cultural markers. A common illustration of the latter case can be found in the following account from Lily (27, immigrant, born in Sri Lanka). This immigrant informant not only recounts her consumer acculturation journey, but also reveals her involvement in self-producing her ethnicity as a commodity:

> I love watching Bollywood films on OMNI Television [national station dedicated to ethnic programming]. And when I do, I often catch ads for No Frills [national deep discount supermarket], Scarborough-area jewelers [predominantly South Asian neighborhood in Toronto], or the Harbourfront Centre [multicultural community center in Toronto]. No Frills does really well at advertising for holidays like Visakhi [religious festival in Sikhism and Hinduism] and Diwali [Hindu Festival of Lights] and all that. They really know how to attract the right customer that they're targeting! [. . .] My family considers No Frills our main grocery store, but we still shop at Oceans Fresh Food Market [multiethnic grocery chain], as well as a bunch of Tamil shops. [. . .] My mom just shops around for prices and that's why she goes to the Oceans and the Tamil stores. But there are some exported goods they don't sell at these small Tamil shops because a lot of times they only cater to East Asians and miss some of the brands. [. . .] I don't know if many of my non–East Asian friends know much about Diwali. I was just chatting with one of my neighbors this weekend and she didn't even know what Diwali is! I feel it's a shame when people living in the same community don't know much about each other's festivals. So I talked to my mom and husband, and we agreed to invite people who are close by over for a mini-Diwali celebration this year. So I will invite the next-door neighbors on both sides and the ones across the street to experience Diwali with us this year and taste my famous Coconut Laddoo (sweet balls) and my mom's famous Kaju Katli (sweetmeat).

In Lily's case, socialization and acculturation into Canadian society happens through television consumption and the vast array of ethnic market offerings profiled in commercials. This informant expresses her East Asian ethnicity by demanding Bollywood films rather than Hollywood movies or Canadian programs. In response, Canadian market actors appease immigrants like Lily by subsidizing a national television station that prides itself on dedicating 60% of its content to ethnic programming in over 20 languages (http://www.omnitv.ca). The station's target ads offer a platform for Lily and her mother to negotiate the Sri Lankan and Canadian cultures. For instance, they have discovered the optimal Canadian supermarket that they believe cares about their price-savviness and that also carries their favorite home, host, and global brands. Lily is thrilled to share with us that this supermarket chain is attuned to her culture's ethnic and religious holidays, thereby making her feel represented and valued by Canadian society without her having to request further special treatment or lament the lack thereof. However, Lily, among our other immigrant informants, is not at all reflexive of the ideologies shaping her beliefs and behavior, or their negative impact on her and her minority group's overall social, political, and economic standing. Furthermore, Lily's story of inviting neighbors to learn about the Diwali festival through her cooking demonstrates how the (formerly) colonized have become complicit in their own ethnicity's commodification as an exotic entertainment product for outsiders.

In turn, our indigene informants also appear to follow their prescribed ethnic consumer subject position by engaging in an abundance of ethnic consumption choices in their everyday lives while frequenting grocery stores, shopping malls, restaurants, and entertainment venues. As an illustration of our indigene informants' mundane consumption practices, consider the following quote from Robin (36, a first-generation Canadian, born in Montreal), who falls prey to a colonialist mindset by rendering the "others" as exoticized consumption experiences:

> I feel that Canada is truly where intercultural harmony is achieved through wide-ranging menus. For me, food is absolutely one of the most enjoyable ways to experience other cultures. For example, I actually feel sophisticated when I turn over the lid of an empty teapot to get a fresh pour of tea at dim sum with my friends. And I feel cool when my favorite neighborhood Thai takeout place doesn't question my requested spice level. [. . .] I think that we learn intimate things about each other at mealtimes. [. . .] I first used chopsticks in a Japanese restaurant, tutored by a Chinese friend who now denies that she was embarrassed by my lack of skills. But I remember how she asked if I wanted a fork. [. . .] A Jewish friend of mine once told me that his WASP [informal term meaning White Anglo-Saxon Protestant] ex-girlfriend was startled by his family dinners, which are very noisy and free-for-all affairs, whereas hers were polite, quiet gatherings. [. . .] Eating is about keeping ourselves alive, and so eating together is about vulnerability and awkwardness. And eating together is about realizing how we grew up, and who we want to be.

Robin presents herself as the ideal Canadian citizen, a beacon of open-mindedness and cosmopolitan curiosity, who has fully internalized that accomplishing interethnic harmony is a matter of navigating and mastering a diverse landscape of ethnic products and practices. On the other side of Robin's welcoming identity, implicitly imagined through her account of the WASP ex-girlfriend, is the intolerant indigene. This undesired citizen would rather narrow-mindedly ask for his/her privileges and self-defining cultural experiences to reign supreme instead of embracing different cultures through consumption. Our indigene informant firmly believes that the best way to learn about oneself and negotiate ethnic differences—for example, between Jewish and WASP family values—is through the consumption of ethnic food at home and in restaurants. However, like our other indigene informants, Robin falls prey to implementing a colonialist gaze by reducing the "other" to consumable products that one should take pride in mastering. Consequently, for Westerners like Robin, "the exotic other affords avenues for displaying cultural capital through knowledge and appreciation of other cultures" (Ger et al. 2018), whereas immigrant consumers are tasked with teaching Westerners how to properly or "authentically" consume their strange cultures (as illustrated by Robin's Chinese friend). Aidan (52, Canadian for many generations, born in Halifax, Nova Scotia) has a similar negative viewpoint of intolerant Canadians who are unwilling to try new exotic consumption choices:

> On Monday [June 27th], we celebrated national Multiculturalism Day. [. . .] But in reality there is little awareness of this annual celebration. It doesn't get promoted in the same way as Canada Day [July 1st, when three separate colonies were united as one]. [. . .] Many of the events listed online were celebrations of what multicultural critics like to call the folkloric aspects of multiculturalism. These are celebrations of specific cultural expressions of some of Canada's ethnic communities. The abundance of ethnic food, song, and dance are seen by them [critics] as undercutting newcomer adoption of Canadian culture. But these same multiculturalism bashers are silent when it comes to St. Patrick's Day celebrations! Perhaps they think Irish cultural expression is not multiethnic [sarcastic tone and smirk]. [. . .] They [critics/bashers] probably worry that such expression of minority ethnic cultures often benefits from government support. Of course, the corporate sponsorships don't bother them [sarcastic tone detected]. Thankfully they're also not out there demanding more Canadian food and less ethnic cuisine [laughs]. [. . .] I think the most negative people toward multiculturalism are the most hostile to minorities, have the least contact with them, and don't like bilingualism. [. . .] When it comes to my children, I'll take the more forward-looking, pro-multiculturalism message in a flash!

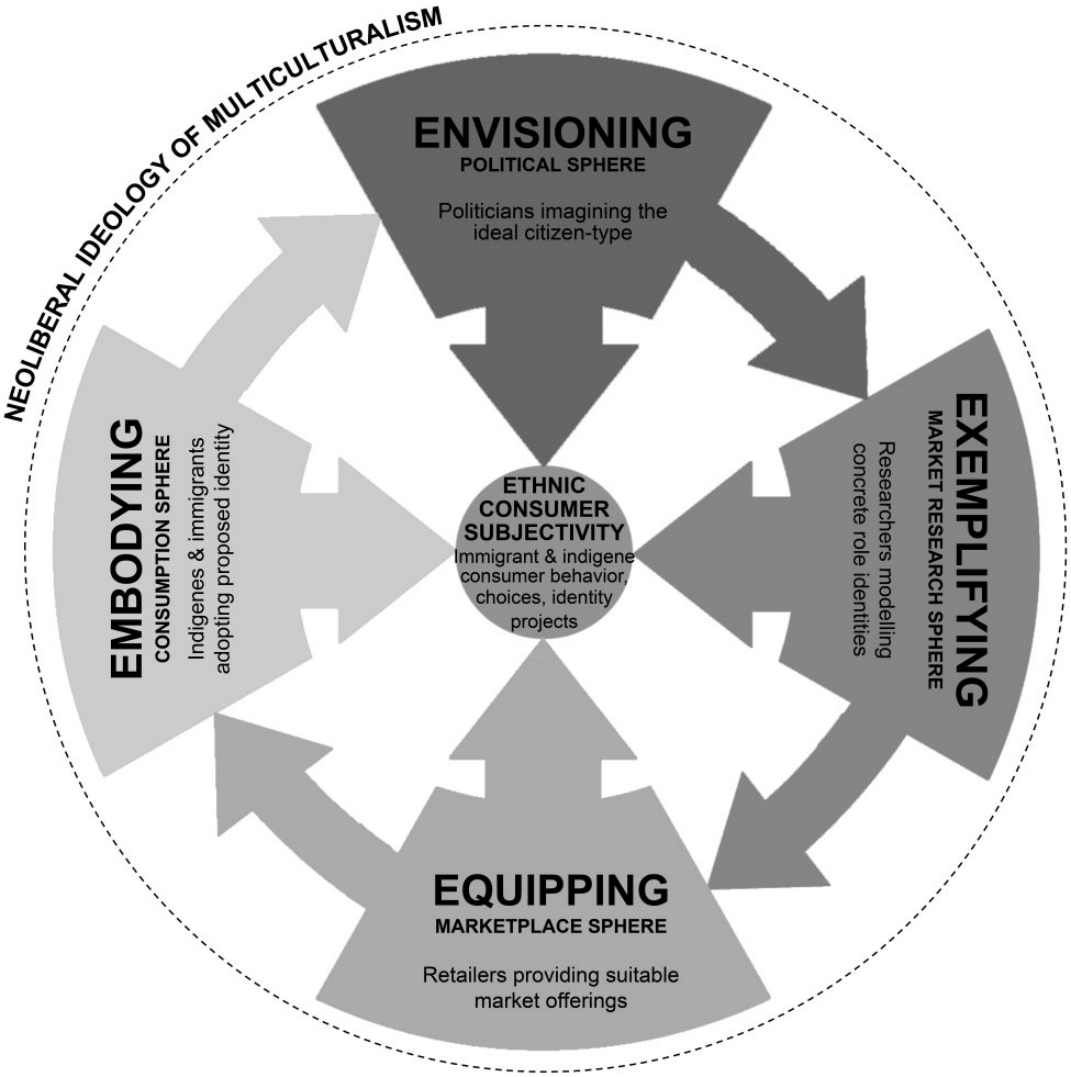
Aidan's account signifies a subject who completely governs himself in accordance to the principles of neoliberal multiculturalism. This informant is a fervent believer that understanding cultural differences can best be achieved through the celebratory consumption of ethnic food, song, and dance at market-based multicultural events. He also tries to instill the same values in his children, as the future generation of Canadians. Moreover, he extensively criticizes indigenes that do not follow the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism as being hostile bigots and racists who don't understand the true value of ethnic consumption in uniting rather than dividing Canadians. However, Aidan himself participates in perpetuating neocolonial power imbalances by embracing the exoticization and commodification of ethnicities through his own consumption choices. Overall, Lily, Robin, and Aidan, among our other consumer informants, demonstrate how embodying an ethnic consumer subjectivity affords different possibilities for immigrants versus indigenes, and ultimately maintains an uneven landscape. On the one hand, indigene consumers play the role of colonizers rendering the colonized as exoticized objects of consumption. On the other hand, immigrant consumers not only allow themselves to be objectified, but actively participate in this commodification process. Yet, by consuming cultural differences, both indigenes and immigrants are complicit in reinforcing rather than eliminating the divide between the "us" and the "stranger" (Ahmed 2000).

DISCUSSION

Our study investigates the institutional forces shaping an ethnic consumer subject in the contemporary Canadian marketplace. Culminating from our analysis of Canadian multiculturalism are four distinct yet overlapping consumer socialization strategies (and types of institutional actor groups) that, together, create an ethnic consumer subject.

FIGURE 1

MARKET-MEDIATED MULTICULTURATION.



This citizen type negotiates his/her own cultural background(s) and engages with different ethnicities predominantly through individual consumption choices made in a multicultural marketplace. The constellation of institutional forces that we have identified comprises the model of market-mediated multiculturation summarized in figure 1. The outer circle represents the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism, which overview studies (Hale 2005; Hall 2000; Kymlicka 2013, 2015; McNeish 2008; Mitchell 2003; Žižek 1997) conceptualize as a mode of governing population diversity and ensuing ethnic group conflicts by linking social inclusion with market competition. The middle section represents the four interrelated consumer socialization strategies (envisioning, exemplifying, equipping, and embodying) emerging from market actors operating in different institutional domains (politics, market research, retail, and consumption). These strategies are shaped by the ideology of neoliberal multiculturalism and, in turn, shape (and constrain) the consumer behavior, choices, and identities of indigene and immigrant consumers differently (represented by the inner circle).

Traditionally, ethnic consumption and the ethnic consumer have been the providence of consumer researchers adopting the theoretical lens of consumer acculturation—the study of how consumers draw on the marketplace to negotiate typically home/host (and third) cultural differences

(Askegaard et al. 2005). Although researchers operating in this domain have developed highly nuanced insights into the types of consumption preferences, choices, objects, rituals, and strategies used to attempt cultivating a meaningful existence in a new culture (Chytkova 2011; Dion et al. 2011; Hu et al. 2013; Jafari and Goulding 2008; Oswald 1999; Peñaloza 1994; Üstüner and Holt 2007; Vihalemm and Keller 2011), as well as into the types of conflicts through which indigenes and immigrants adjust their consumer habits and identities in the pursuit of a meaningful coexistence (Luedicke 2015), they focus entirely on the actions and experiences of people as consumers, and thus are far less theoretically capable of "situating acts of consumption, their motivations and consequences in a world that reaches beyond the subjectivity of the agent" (Askegaard and Linnet 2011, 387; Giesler and Veresiu 2014; Humphreys and Thompson 2014; Karababa and Ger 2011).

To address this issue, our starting point is Ger et al.'s (2018) critical discussion of global consumer culture research. Ger and colleagues encourage consumer researchers to employ a host of critical sociological and historical perspectives that can bring into clearer relief how myths of global consumer culture research—such as the myth of playful encounters of the local and the global, or the myth that immigrant consumption is all about acculturation—operate (and constrain our own perspectives as researchers of ethnic consumption) "within the historical and current socio/cultural/political relations between the North and South, the center and periphery, or the dominant and the dominated" (Ger et al 2018). Adopting this perspective has allowed us to demonstrate that even a context that has been widely portrayed as the shining exemplar of ethnic inclusion and friendship—Canada—invariably harbors a number of problematic colonial biases and inequalities.

First, by studying immigrants as people who are shaped as consumers, we develop an understanding of conflict in ethnic consumption that moves beyond the apolitical, ahistorical, and universalist approach to conflict common in consumer acculturation research. This approach typically renders clashes between cultures that are different but equal (Luedicke 2015). In contrast, we show how a colonizing consumer culture may transform the ethnic "other" (and convince the "other" to transform itself) into an exoticized subject that helps reproduce entrenched divides between "us" and "them," thereby cultivating a playing field for conflicts between indigenes and immigrants that sustains colonial hegemony and inequalities. Hence, we have shown not only how conflicts are negotiated through the marketplace, but also which institutional strategies afford a society in which indigenes and immigrants are no longer understood (and studied) as people but as constantly adjusting and acculturating consumers, and through which ideological mechanisms and differences between cultures are selected, exoticized, and commodified.

Second, by empirically examining how the processes of transforming immigrants into consumers occlude entrenched power imbalances and foster definitions of diversity that perpetuate, rather than resolve, forms of exotic otherness and differences between "us" and "them," we also demonstrate that—counter to previous consumer acculturation research—the cultures that clash are never equal. Luedicke's (2015) analysis, for instance, portrays the struggle between Turkish and Austrian consumers as a struggle among equal consumers. In sharp contrast, once the standard focus on home and host cultural influences is shifted to the relationship between colonizing (immigrant-receiving) and colonized (immigrant-sending) cultures, we can see that the conditions of possibility for each culture are very different. Canadian multiculturalism expects the colonized to brand, package, and perform their own ethnicity while it allows the colonizers to display their knowledge and appreciation of other cultures (Cook and Harrison 2003).

Third, another important empirical question that has been ignored by prior consumer acculturation research, and that we answer in this article, is: Who produces these renderings of the "other" that become "an essentialized mystical and emotional resource for the West" (Ger et al. 2018)? Our study not only shows that fetishizing the stranger and his or her strangeness as well as degrading the "other" to a consumable and a self-consuming subject are preconditions for the effective working of multicultural market societies, but also that this act of fetishizing is now a daily task for a host of marketplace actors, including policy makers, market researchers, advertisers, and entrepreneurs. We identify some of the key institutional actors who—passionately convinced that they are helping build bridges of cultural understanding and cultivating a society of friendly inclusion and ethnic coexistence—produce, circulate, and control fetishized differences that invariably perpetuate colonial hegemony.

While the market-mediated multiculturation model that we have developed in this article sheds new light on the specifically Canadian regime for making all ethnicity consumable (and what hegemonies and historical inequalities between colonizer and colonized become invisible in the process), the dominance of ethnicity as a market system (Giesler and Fischer 2017) is an issue not only in Canada but in all countries, as witnessed by a multitude of regionalisms and ethnic group conflicts (Luedicke 2015; Wilk 1995). Consequently, we strongly encourage future consumer culture researchers to not treat the experiences of the acculturating consumer as an essentialized point of departure, but to instead pay more critical attention to the different ideological and socioeconomic contexts that condition this consumer's behavior and the institutional frameworks that blanket uneven power relations between immigrant-sending and immigrant-receiving cultures in a seemingly inclusive marketplace. Doing so may help us better understand to whose benefit and to whose loss immigration and immigrant experiences are shaped today.

DATA COLLECTION INFORMATION

The lead author conducted all interviews in Canada between winter 2011 and spring 2017. The lead author also collected all the online and offline institutional-level data during the same period. The complete dataset was discussed on multiple occasions by both authors. This article is based on the lead author's dissertation.

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