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RESEARCH STATEMENT

As a social worker in Chicago, I served communities stigmatized and marginalized by society (e.g., individuals living with HIV/AIDS; people identifying as LGBT; refugees). These efforts exposed me to the experiences, complexities, and hardships that accompany marginalization. They also developed my awareness of the structural forces (e.g. institutions, cultural narratives) that alleviated or perpetuated it, and the resilience of individuals and communities to challenge it. My background in social work informs my research which examines the perspectives and experiences of individuals and communities facing marginalization, or a degree of powerlessness, in the marketplace. Directing attention toward marginalization refutes assumptions of access and abundance of choice and encourages consideration of issues of representation.

In consumer research, scholars have paid increasing attention to processes of marketplace marginalization (e.g., consumers' innovative coping strategies; consumers' efforts to advocate for greater marketplace inclusion). An area where our understanding is more limited, and what my work aims to address, are processes of marketplace transformation – when societal change challenges, or even alters, positions of marginalization for consumers. It examines how broad cultural shifts are encoded in the marketplace and explores the consequences of such transformations for consumers, marketers, and other constituents who attach importance to these changes (e.g., religious groups, civil liberty groups, and regulatory bodies). My research interests, therefore, lie at the intersection of identity politics – or affiliation generated from shared experiences of oppression and efforts to challenge it – and the marketplace. I have studied how the marketplace is impacted by (a) the changing roles of parents as caregivers (e.g., how parents negotiate outsourcing childcare); (b) the increasing recognition and acceptance of particular identities (e.g., LGBT community); and (c) the interplay between different cultural groups (e.g., migration within and across borders). Each project is described below.

In a paper published in *Journal of Consumer Research*, entitled "Outsourcing Parenthood: How Families Manage Care Assemblages Using Paid Commercial Services," I investigated a context in which macro forces – such as expanding roles of women in the workforce; geographic dispersion of extended family; dwindling public services –produced a care deficit at home. In response, the marketplace attempted to fill this gap by increasing the assortment of caregiving services it offered. This poses a dilemma for parents who must decide which care activities are acceptable to outsource – a complicated choice because of disparaging cultural discourses that imply a separation between family and the marketplace, where the latter is felt to contaminate or commercialize the former. In other words, outsourcing the caregiving activities typically carried out by parents asserts a redefinition of what it means to be a parent. This work uncovers the nuanced strategies parents use to navigate tensions (e.g. control, intimacy, and substitutability) arising from outsourcing care to commercial establishments, and demonstrates how these tensions differentially shape their processes for (re)assembling care resources.

My dissertation work includes a paper *invited for revision* at *Journal of Consumer Research*. The paper entitled, "From Symbolic Violence to Revolution: The Diverse Destigmatization Experiences of LGBT Consumers," looks at a time of cultural change when a broad social movement – LGBT civil rights – has generated increased acceptance and recognition for the community. Although historically ignored or largely underserved by the mainstream marketplace (e.g., national brands, retail chains), LGBT

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consumers are gaining representation through targeted products, services, and market imagery, as mainstream retailers face pressure to support more inclusive definitions of gender, sexuality, and family. This study looks at the reorganization of relations – norms, positions of (dis)advantage, authority and subordination – as consumers gain legitimacy and influence in the market. Further, this work reveals how heterogeneity within the community structures consumers' relations to the changing marketplace. It demonstrates that there is no "LGBT consumer" but rather a multiplicity of consumer positions which generate diverse experiences with and responses to market inclusion. This paper moves beyond detailing those differences and instead identifies the underlying factors that systematically produce them.

Further, in "Marketers' Constructions of Contested Markets" (Target: *Journal of Marketing*), I focus on how marketers manage broad cultural change. In particular, this paper examines marketers' efforts to construct market segments from communities that are newly (or increasingly) recognized in society as a result of shifting power dynamics and changing norms. It examines how the institutionally complex environments in which these marketers are enveloped – where constituents' cultural beliefs and expectations can be unclear, contradictory, or even evolving – shape these efforts. This complex environment presents a challenge for whether and how marketers should respond. In contrast to prior literature which focuses on the efforts of companies proximal to the cultural tension or to those elite iconic brands astute at addressing it (e.g., Coca-Cola, Nike, Apple), this work attends to those companies that have no compelling strategic reason to engage, yet choose to do so anyway. This engagement is neither expected nor explained by the current literature, and this study aims to explicate how the socio-cultural environment influences these marketers' strategies.

The role of marketplace stakeholders (e.g., consumers, companies, and employees) and offerings (e.g., products, services, experiences) on (de)stigmatization processes is further explored in a conceptual paper *forthcoming* in *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing* entitled "The Stigma Turbine: A Theoretical Framework for Conceptualizing and Contextualizing Marketplace Stigma." This paper extends beyond the literature's primary focus on the experiences of those subjected to stigmatization to look at the influence of the marketplace in creating, perpetuating, and resisting stigmatization. It unifies currently fragmented works in this area into a conceptual framework that situates the marketplace's influence within the broader sociocultural context (e.g. historical, institutional, and societal forces). The paper elaborates on the implications of this framework for marketing practice and public policy and outlines a clear agenda for future research in the area of marketplace stigma. The idea for this paper emerged from a stigma-focused session at the *Transformative Consumer Research Conference*. This collaborative co-authorship with an interdisciplinary team of scholars (e.g. psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists) offered exposure to diverse perspectives and approaches and further developed my conceptual understanding of stigma.

Another paper entitled, "Stigma's Presence and Impact on Consumer Acculturation," (Target: *Journal of Consumer Research*) investigates the process of change that occurs when two or more cultural groups and its members engage – termed acculturation. Acknowledging consumption's significant role in cultural production, consumer researchers have focused on acculturation's impact on consumer identity formation (e.g., learning how another culture purchases and consumes goods; understanding the meanings embedded within those goods and consumption practices). Extending this work, my research considers the role of stigmatization in this process, focusing on contexts typified by power inequities, ideological conflict, and a

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consumer culture enforcing relatively uniform ideals (dominated acculturation). While stigma is often noted in acculturation research, its impact on this process has not yet been directly theorized. More specifically, this work explores how stigmatization can drive local citizens to impede assimilation and advocate for the separation and marginalization of new migrants. It recognizes acculturation as a mutual process involving dominant and non-dominant groups, focuses on the responses and impacts of local consumers, and aims to increase understanding around the underlying processes producing the constraint often observed in acculturation environments.

Lastly, I have a conceptual paper entitled, "Rethinking Consumer Acculturation: Expanding Beyond Territory to Consider Evolving Constructions of Social Membership" (Target: *Journal of Consumer Research*, working paper available). In this paper, I argue that current theoretical conceptualizations of consumer acculturation are too narrow to address contemporary complexities. In particular, these conceptualizations need to extend their focus beyond consumers' territorial movement between nation-states. My broader theorization addresses intra-national forms of social migration (e.g. first generation college students; social-class mobility; rural migrants relocating to urban areas). This reevaluated conceptualization of acculturation recognizes an increasingly complex, globalized, and fragmented context. Incorporating social migrations into acculturation research offers the potential to enhance our capacity to understand experiences of belonging and the impacts of transitioning between human collectives. It also has the potential to build on, or perhaps even transform, current models of consumer acculturation by revealing different cultural discourses, individual differences, and acculturation agents of impact, as well as unique processes and outcomes.