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HOSSAIN SHAHRIAR | DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION



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My findings develop the gender transculturation model that exhibits how respondents draw from four conflicting gender ideologies. They engage in perpetual and fluid navigation of ideological tensions through three modes of gender transculturation: ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis. They demonstrate ossification by rigidifying patriarchal and Islamic and being resistant towards egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Oscillation is embodied by retention of patriarchal and Islamic and reworking of egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. In osmosis, they reject patriarchal and romanticise and reflect on egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies.

This is a book for consumer researchers, marketers, managers, social actors, policy-makers, and consumers who want to know more about migrant consumers with vast ideological differences and their views and beliefs on gender in the marketplace.



## Gender Transculturation



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## Navigating Market-Mediated Contesting Gender Ideologies in Consumer Acculturation

Hossain Shahriar



**LUND**  
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# Gender Transculturation

Navigating Market-Mediated Contesting Gender  
Ideologies in Consumer Acculturation

Hossain Shahriar



SCHOOL OF  
ECONOMICS AND  
MANAGEMENT



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*For all those who navigate the complex waters and contesting  
ideological tensions in their everyday lives*

The world is full of conflicts and full of things that cannot be reconciled. But there are moments when we can...reconcile and embrace the whole mess, and that's what I mean by 'Hallelujah'.

– Leonard Cohen

It matters not what someone is born, but what they grow to be. Differences of habit and language are nothing at all if our aims are identical and our hearts are open. Understanding is the first step to acceptance, and only with acceptance can there be recovery.

– J. K. Rowling  
(as Albus Dumbledore in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire)

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Hossain Shahriar  
Malmö, 2022

## Abstract

In this book, I advance the concept of *gender transculturation* to illustrate how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies in their host cultural marketplace. Taking a consumer cultural theoretical perspective, the study lies in the nexus of and unpacks an alternative understanding in the current research frontier of consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies. Acculturation of immigrants and gender have become increasingly critical issues in contemporary academic, socio-economic and politico-cultural debates. Rising mobility and migration from the Global South to the Global North have steered immigrants to cross transcultural borders into contexts that are ideologically diverse. South Asian respondents from the Bangladeshi diaspora in Sweden have been interviewed to understand their home, host and transcultural discourses about gender through their narratives about the marketplace and consumption.

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## Prelude

I grew up in a small, densely populated, South Asian country called Bangladesh. Growing up in a middle-class family in the urban capital Dhaka, I was privileged in many ways. I could afford to attend a private English-medium education, I never had to think about the consumption of necessities and to some extent even luxuries. However, from my very childhood, I was exposed to and indoctrinated in a socio-cultural structure built on patriarchy and informed by the religious influences of Islam. At home, I saw that my father was the sole breadwinner of the family, while my mother was responsible for the domestic care of the family. It was a norm that women were the ones to eat last and men were the ones consuming the finer things in life. At school, I saw my male peers having more freedom than females in every aspect of daily life, such as clothing and hanging out. Studying in one of the leading private universities in the country, I witnessed how boys sexualised and demeaned their female friends. I saw how I had more freedom to travel with friends and stay out late at night than my sister or female friends.

To me, gender was binary and as a man, I experienced the privilege of hegemonic masculinity that seemed normalised. I used to think that there was no place for gender non-binary individuals, or *hijras* as they are called in Bangladesh, who were social outcasts, treated with fear and only retorted to violence. As I completed my education, I worked in a rural town for some time, and for the first time, I actually noticed how women were even more oppressed there than in the urban area where I grew up. This is the first cultural clash I experienced about gender among many other things. I have been grappling with the fact that women were treated as inferior and lived their lives in a perennial panopticon designed by masculine oppressors. Even working in one of the best workplaces in the country, I noticed how women in my workplace were objectified and degraded by my male colleagues. Moreover, I implicitly participated in that culture by not calling them out and even laughing at their jokes. Shame!

Then one day suddenly everything changed, as I crossed borders to Sweden for my Masters. Instantaneously, I encountered and experienced an ideological conflict that shook me to my very core. I was exposed to a more gender-equal ideology in Sweden, where women were treated equal to men. I began to participate in domestic chores, sharing household work with my wife. I remember my mother crying when she heard that I was involved in cleaning the house or washing dishes, something that she only saw women engaging in. But I also had more freedom; I did not need to adhere to a socially normative masculine ideal and I did not need to be defined by my masculinity. I realised that gender and sexuality do not have any real impact; LGBTQ+ individuals were just like the rest of us, capable and normal.

Nevertheless, I found it difficult to adapt to a culture very much different from my own in terms of gender, religion and socio-cultural norms and values. Even though I did not consume Swedish media and culture, I found that I was still exposed to various ideologies here because I had to engage in consumption. While the Swedish marketplace offered a diverse assortment of resources for me to reshape my values and practices, I knew that as a consumer I accepted some and resisted others.

For my master's thesis, I explored gender-neutral and transgressive advertising, and once again, the very foundations of my understanding were shaken. I was exposed to a new wave of contemplations, adding to my ideological conflicts. I still find it difficult to navigate a wide gamut of contesting ideologies. I am still connected to my home country, particularly through social media. In recent times, I have noticed a new wave of religious dominance influencing the already tilted gender ideals in Bangladesh. But today, albeit frustratingly, I know to call out and resist those that engage in debasing females and other genders and actively support more freedom and acceptance of all genders and sexualities in my life, perhaps to repent for my mistakes in being complicit in upholding normative masculinity.

In summary, these personal experiences and academic influences inspired me to study contesting gender ideologies that immigrants encounter in their acculturation, in the marketplace.

# Introduction

Acculturation of migrants and gender have long been well-debated issues within social sciences and have become increasingly more important within marketing and consumer research over the last three decades (Bettany et al., 2010; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Marketing and consumer research scholars have extensively explored both these topics separately to understand how migrant acculturation continually transforms societies and structures consumption (Üstüner & Holt, 2007), as well as the gendered nature of consumption and the role of marketing in the construction of gender (Arsel, Eräranta & Moisander, 2015). The nexus of acculturation and gender have been accorded heightened attention within the fields of migration and gender studies, with gender issues taking a central stage in debates on acculturation and integration (Donato et al., 2006; Kofman, Saharso & Vacchelli, 2015; McIlwaine, 2010). However, in consumer research, only a few scholars have investigated this sensitive intersection of the gendered nature of transcultural migration experiences (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). The European Union has dubbed gender as such an indispensable part of migration that the privation of gender discourses in migration and integration policies can have a detrimental impact on immigrants, particularly those who are more vulnerable, such as Muslim women from patriarchal cultures (Kofman, Saharso & Vacchelli, 2015; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020). Furthermore, research has shown that as individuals cross transnational borders, their views and ideals on gender transform, indicating the mutability of gender ideologies in acculturation experiences (McIlwaine, 2010). However, in consumer research, the role of consumption and the marketplace in that specific transformation, and vice versa, has received scant attention. Therefore, the objective of this research is to understand how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies in their new host culture.

Today, a considerable part of Europe's population is diverse, comprising first and subsequent generations of immigrants (Röder & Mühlau, 2014). Over the last few decades, migration, diversity, tolerance and multiculturalism have become critical and pressing issues in contemporary academic, political, socio-cultural, economic and policy debates, as, in many countries, they exemplify major challenges in terms of multicultural enhancement and endangerment of local identities (Askegaard & Özçaglar-Toulouse, 2011; Fisher, 2004). Migration to industrialised Western nations has seen substantial growth in recent years (Luedicke, 2011). In 2015-16, more than one million people—mostly from Muslim countries—were granted

asylum in the European Union during what was dubbed the global refugee ‘crisis’ (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020; Eurostat, 2016; 2017). Sweden had a record high 162,877 applications of refugees—over 1.5% of its total population—from Muslim countries (Eurostat, 2016; 2017). This has led to a diverse and multicultural population, which has also been reflected in the development of multicultural and multiethnic marketplace manifestations offering a wide assortment of symbolic resources with local, global and foreign cultural meanings (Demangeot, Broderick & Craig, 2015; Kipnis, Broderick & Demangeot, 2014; Ulver, 2021; Veresiu & Giesler, 2018). Hence, Europe serves as a good backdrop to understanding the acculturation and integration of immigrant minorities (Lesińska, 2014). In this study, Sweden was used as such a context to understand consumer acculturation.

Most immigrants in Europe, from the Global South, come from countries with less gender-egalitarian ideologies to countries with more gender equality (Röder & Mühlau, 2014). It is important to highlight that the use of *gender ideologies* in this study does not correspond to ‘the gender ideology’, which is a right-wing anti-gender counter-movement mobilised and disseminated as a conservative critique against gender theory, as indicated by gender scholars (Butler, 2019; 2021; Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021). In line with various scholars in marketing and consumer research (cf. Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019; Ourahmoune, Binninger & Robert, 2014; Thompson & Üstüner, 2015; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), in this study, I use the term ‘gender ideologies’ as generically referring to any ideologies related to and incorporating ideas about gender relations. Hence, I do not use the term in a derogatory way, as critiqued by Butler (2019; 2021) and Dobscha and Ostberg (2021) who rejected the view that gender theory constitutes an ideology in itself. Here, I adhere to it as an ideology of many<sup>1</sup>. My use of the term ‘gender ideologies’ can be interpreted as an attempt to *endorse* this generic meaning of the phrase and *resist* its use as a narrative of perversion (Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021). The use of ‘contesting gender ideologies’ generally represents a tension between a more “traditional gender ideal based on discourses in the home culture” and a more “Western market-based liberal ideology” of “modern femininity” based on host cultural discourses (Chytкова, 2011, pp. 269, 276, 283). However, in this study, it also involves a more diverse assortment of gender discourses impacted by religious and transculturation influences. Discourses, steeped in ideologies, were studied in this research to understand how migrant consumers navigate conflicting ideologies.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Žižek, our views and acts are always political and steeped in ideologies—even by being indifferent and without necessarily embracing a certain viewpoint, we espouse an ideology—and thus, humans subscribe to certain ideologies because it is inconceivable for a subject to be ideology-free (Carrington, Zwick & Neville, 2016; Coffin & Egan-Wyer, 2022).

Previous research exploring what I call here gender ideologies among divergent cultures (e.g., Chytкова, 2011) has looked into gender identities of immigrant consumers drawing from home countries with traditional gender discourse and host countries with the dominant culture characterised by higher gender equality. This could be understood as consumers acculturating into a culture infused with more gender egalitarianism and transgression in their new host culture. Most scholars in consumer research have used ‘feminism’ as a concept to illustrate the transgression from the hegemonic gender order. For instance, following Hearn and Hein (2015), Ostberg (2022, p. 223) defined “feminism as a set of theories, politics, and practices that contest the dominant gender order”. Furthermore, the concept of ‘gender transgression’ (Shahriar, 2021) has been used in a wide variety of domains, such as sociology, gender, media, culture and post-colonial studies (Blackwood, 2005; Li-Vollmer & LaPointe, 2003; McGrath & Chananie-Hill, 2009; McGuffey & Rich, 1999; Rawson, 2018). In this research, I distinguished between the feminist objective to achieve gender equality and gender transgression which builds on the former but also moves beyond aiming to achieve equality of binary genders into other forms of challenges to the normative gender order. This includes advocating alternative gender identities and movements, such as gender non-binary, transgender androgynous, gender-neutral, fluid, agender or genderless movements (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Hence, gender-transgressive ideology (Brill, 2007; Shahriar, 2021), similar to feminist or gender-equal ideology, also contests the current dominant patriarchal gender order

Despite their heterogeneity, immigrants in Europe from the Global South come from certain religious and cultural backgrounds. They come from cultures with ideologies and structures different from those communicated in their new host culture through various means. For instance, according to Marotta (2014, p. 99), “in some cases migrant women construct their multiple identities both in response and in resistance to gendered hegemonic narratives evident in their ethnic and host communities”. Hence, their acculturation—through consumption and marketplace—is influenced by discourses from their home and host cultures<sup>2</sup> (Peñaloza, 1994; Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011). However, such categorisation of the home and host culture as a “homogenous system of collectively shared meanings, ways of life, and unifying values shared by a member of society” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 869) has been critiqued by scholars for “condensation of diverse geo-political spheres, racial differences, local (sub-) cultures, and historicized social systems into two distinct cultures”, producing essentialisation,

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<sup>2</sup> Nomenclature: Scholars in consumer research have employed various terminologies to designate the cultures individuals migrate from and to, such as ‘immigrant-receiving’ and ‘immigrant-sending’ cultures (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018), ‘host society’ and ‘society of immigration’ (Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983) or ‘native’ (Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004) and ‘dominated’ (Üstüner & Holt, 2007). The most commonly used formulations are ‘home’ and ‘host’ cultures (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Oswald, 1999), which have been used in this study.



advocating ‘culturalism’ and “a potentially outdated degree of structural and ideological stability” (Luedicke, 2011, p. 234). This essentialist view of culture can be deemed politically dangerous because it can lead to exclusionary practices and does not reflect existing contemporary social and cultural configurations (Welsch, 1999, pp. 194-195). Hence, there is a need to move beyond a dualistic home–host cultural orientation and adopt a more transcultural perspective. Nevertheless, this aforementioned viewpoint promoting theoretical culturalism has been pivotal in conceptualising consumer acculturation (Luedicke, 2011) and has become increasingly prevalent in today’s world brimming with crises and conflicts (Bourne et al., 2022). Thus, it is essential to take a more nuanced perspective, but simultaneously, not disregard this home–host categorisation.

Moving into a new place with a different ideological structure from their home culture, immigrants typically interact in complex ways with their new host culture. One domain that manages to influence their values and practices is the marketplace in the form of consumption and communication. Veresiu and Giesler (2018) argue that the marketplace acts as an institutional instrument and influences ethnic immigrants and majority residents<sup>3</sup>. From consumer acculturation, we know that these migrant consumers come to a new place and find the need to shape a new life. However, one thing that has not been looked at in previous literature—that this research highlights and is worthy of attention—is how these migrant consumers handle higher-order ideological clashes, navigating various ideological tensions between traditional patriarchal in their home and a more equal gender ideology in their host culture (Chytkova, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), as well as other discourses not studied within the consumer acculturation literature. This research is important because it can expand our knowledge of acculturation and gender, which is worthy of attention in today’s multi-ethnic societies.

To interrogate how migrant consumers navigate conflicting tensions in terms of gender-ideological differences, in this research, I studied migrant consumers from Bangladesh living in Sweden. Muslim immigrants in Sweden come from societies with patriarchal gender ideologies—for example from countries such as Bangladesh—and encounter diverse gender ideologies in their immigrant-receiving cultures—the Swedish society—as they interact with the marketplace. When they cross borders and arrive in Sweden, they have to navigate across patriarchal and

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<sup>3</sup> Nomenclature: On the one hand, most studies in consumer research have used the terms ‘migrants’ or ‘immigrants’ to designate “individuals that have crossed national, social and/or cultural borders within the span of two preceding generations” (Luedicke, 2011, p. 225). On the other hand, consumer researchers have deployed a wide gamut of expressions to describe “citizens with primary socialization and a lengthy family history in the context under study” (Luedicke, 2011, p. 225), such as: such as indigenes (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018; Luedicke, 2015), natives (Oswald, 1999), mainstream (Peñaloza, 1994; Kipnis, Broderick & Demangoet, 2014), locals (Luedicke, 2011), the local majority (Kipnis, Broderick & Demangoet, 2014), local citizens, inhabitants or residents. In this study, ‘majority residents’ has been used to designate non-immigrant Swedes.

religious gender ideologies from their home culture and more transgressive and equal gender ideologies in their host culture (Shahriar, 2021)—induced by the feminist Swedish state at the time of this research (Government Offices of Sweden, 2021a; Swedish Institute, 2021) and facilitated by the transnational consumer culture—experienced through, for instance, consumption and the marketplace. However, after the recent September 2022 elections, the Swedish government has ‘ditched’ the label of a feminist foreign policy (Juhlin, 2022; Lund, 2022; Thomas, 2022; Thurfjell, 2022), ushering in an upcoming shift in policies related to gender.

In the rest of this chapter, first I take a look at the importance of conducting this study. This chapter then critically reviews the existing literature on consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies, to formulate the research problem and aimed contributions of this study. The chapter ends with a brief overview of the rest of this book.

## A Study of Gender in Consumer Acculturation

This section briefly discusses the significance of conducting this study. First, I review consumer acculturation and the gender-related conflicts it generates in the marketplace, followed by the importance of understanding issues of gender ideologies in the marketplace and the significance of understanding the intersection of gender and migration issues.

### Crossing of Cultures

Consumer acculturation is the adaptation by immigrants and/or ethnic/racial minorities to an unacquainted consumer culture (Veresiu & Giesler, 2011). Within consumer research, studying transcultural consumer acculturation experiences has been emphasised as a growingly important process to explore (Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Current literature on consumer acculturation focuses primarily on neo-liberalism and globalisation, which reinforce the socio-economic and cultural dominance of the Global North and expedite global mobility and migration from the South to the North (Crockett, 2021). According to Luedicke (2011, p. 223):

The integration of individuals with different cultural backgrounds into a nation's political, legal, educational, and cultural landscape rates among the top 10 current public policy concerns of many Western nations.

Thus, acculturation can result in cultural conflicts and clashes (Luedicke, 2011) in the form of identity (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) and ideology (Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Ulver, 2022). Veresiu and Giesler (2018, p. 553) posited the notion of ‘neoliberal multiculturalism’ 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.

While previous literature within consumer acculturation has discussed how conflicts between the immigrant and majority residents are negotiated through consumption (Luedicke, 2011; 2015; Üstüner & Holt, 2007; Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005), Veresiu and Giesler (2018) argued that such conflicts between two different value systems can be de-politicised and transformed through the marketplace by the commodification of ethnic consumers, reproducing and sustaining existing inequalities. However, this negotiation of conflicts presumes that marketplace actors—such as the government and politicians, brands and marketers, immigrants and majority residents—all work to “attenuate ethnic group conflicts” (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018, p. 553). In contrast, recent studies within consumer research (Ulver & Laurell, 2020; Ulver, 2022; 2021) have shown that such issues might become unpoliticised—cultivating a culture of cynicism and resentment that propels polarisation—and it might not be in the interest of market actors to assuage such conflicts, as they stand to gain from monetising conflicts.

The resurgence of far-right ideologies in many countries worldwide—in the Global North and South—is evident today with governments espousing the political agenda of nationalism rising to power. Far-right movements are making strides beyond the dominion of politics—in society, marketplace, consumption and consumer culture (Castelló & Mihelj, 2018; Ulver & Laurell, 2020). Such ‘illiberal’ consumer movements from the far-right or alt-right—such as the Danish People’s Party preserving the notion of ‘Denmark for Danish’—have been connected with antagonism to social liberal democracy and placed in contrast to the ‘market liberal’ ideology, in essence creating a bifurcation of two polarising consumer cultures (Kymlicka, 2010; Ulver, 2022). Victorious in the 2022 elections, Giorgia Meloni is forming the most right-wing government in Italy since the Second World War. Even Sweden, long heralded as a left-leaning social welfare and feminist state, has seen a recent upsurge in conservative mobilisation, with a bloc of right-wing political parties winning the 2022 general elections, displacing the incumbent centre-left Social Democrats.

While this change in outlook towards immigration can be traced back to ‘radical’ right populist anti-immigration movements, it cannot be reduced only to the right-wing advocates anymore, as it is growing pervasively among the majority of residents (Berezin, 2009; Lesińska, 2014). According to Lesińska (2014), political backlash against immigrants has swept over Europe, with trepidations from mainstream political leaders about unemployment and economic well-being due to immigrants’ disinclination for integration, their ‘parasitic’ influence on the welfare economy and even involvement in criminal activities. There have been calls for

more stringent control over immigration (particularly against uncontrolled and illegal immigrants and refugees) and a stance towards more assimilative integration rather than an undisputed acceptance of cultural diversity (Lesińska, 2014). Such calls—which used to be from minority groups from the political periphery within the right wing—have become more audible and visible from mainstream residents and political leaders, leading to anti-immigration policies, stricter regulations in immigration and citizenship and a less tolerant stance towards diversity (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014; Lesińska, 2014). The majority of residents have grown weary of the socio-cultural and economic implications of immigration and diversity, such as increased competition in the job market, a burden of the welfare economy, exacerbation of social perils and security concerns—such as ethno-specific crimes—and the endangerment to national culture and identity (Kymlicka, 2010; Lesińska, 2014). This has created an atmosphere of scepticism and antagonism towards immigrants and consequently legitimised political leaders to be vocal about and implement changes to areas of immigration rights, migration laws and policy debates (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014; Lesińska, 2014). This political shift can also be framed as a counter-movement against the notion of multiculturalism.

Will Kymlicka delineated multiculturalism—with regards to differentiated citizenship (1995)—as “a feel-good celebration of ethno-cultural diversity, encouraging citizens to acknowledge and embrace the panoply of customs, traditions, music and cuisine that exist in a multi-ethnic society” (2010, p. 98), and hence, consumption. According to Imbert (2014, p. 17), multiculturalism

is linked to the policy of recognising other groups and is related to the democratic struggle against all forms of colonialism, imperialism and exclusion (Imbert 2008), as well as to public practices that apply to minorities in their everyday life.

Furthermore, “the concept of multiculturalism has attracted much attention both in academia and in political everyday life and is both ontologically and inherently controversial” (Ulver, 2021, p. 395). According to Lesińska (2014, p. 38), the celebratory approach to multiculturalism has led to more segregation than integration—among immigrants and immigrant-receiving cultures—and “widespread concern about its socially fragmenting impact”. Ulver (2021) posited that our collective consciousness and public debates pertaining to a multicultural society serves as ideological fantasies of the market’s multicultural imagery. In Europe, multiculturalism has been dubbed as a ‘crisis’, ‘failure’, ‘failed experiment’ and ‘dead’ with increasing conversations about a ‘backlash’ and a ‘pull back from multiculturalism’ (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014; Kymlicka, 2010; Lentin & Titley, 2012; Lesińska, 2014; Titley, 2019; Vertovec & Wessendorf, 2010). Sweden has been characterised “a failure of multiculturalism” (Ulver, 2021, p. 392). Even those on the centre-left of the political spectrum posit that multiculturalism has not achieved what it intended—to benefit the acculturating ethnic minorities—because it has failed to address the primary reason for their socio-economic exclusion,

inadvertently leading to their socio-economic isolation (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014; Kymlicka, 2010). Hence, even the early advocates of multiculturalism—such as the social democratic political parties in Europe—have abandoned the ethos of multiculturalism towards a discourse of national integration—that is different from that of the far-right in terms of the resistance against xenophobia and bigotry—that showcases “a more inclusive national identity” through “integration, social cohesion, common values, and shared citizenship” (Kymlicka, 2010, p. 98). Against this backdrop of backlash against multiculturalism and increased migration in Europe, the importance of exploring consumer acculturation experiences of immigrants is pivotal.

Scholars have drawn the parallels and peculiarities between the ‘multicultural’, ‘intercultural’ and ‘transcultural’ and posited *transculturality* to be “the most adequate concept of culture today” (Marotta, 2014; Welsch, 1999, p. 194). While the concept of interculturality attempts to reduce cultural tensions and promotes cultures to understand and recognise one another by viewing cultures as distinct islands or spheres, multiculturalism is an essentialist perspective that embraces a closed conception of cultures—viewing them as incommensurable—that attempts to understand cross-cultural encounters within cultures in a particular society instead of across cultures (Epstein, 2009; Marotta, 2014; Welsch, 1999). As opposed to these notions of culture as homogenous and separate, transculturality is an outcome of “the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures” illustrating how culture and life are inextricably intertwined at a macro-societal sphere as well as micro-cultural level—as they “interpenetrate or emerge” from each other, owing to migration and global communication and economic interdependencies—characterised by hybridisation (Marotta, 2014; Welsch, 1999, pp. 197-8). It “interconnects and integrates various cultural forms” and commonalities to “transcend our monocultural standpoints” (Marotta, 2014, pp. 96-97; Welsch, 1999, p. 205). Current research in migration studies is increasingly focusing on the transcultural nature of acculturation (Hoerder, 2012; Hope, 2011; Meinhof & Triandafyllidou, 2006; Schmitt, 2010; Triandafyllidou, 2009). In this study, I adopted a transcultural perspective to explore consumer acculturation because it transcends the essentialist notion of multiculturalism, as explicated by Marotta (2014, p. 97):

In contrast to the globalisation thesis and the ideology of multiculturalism, the transculture represents the freedom from one’s own culture; it refers to a transcendence of cultural borders through the wonderings through and transgression at the boundaries of various cultures. It is through these wonderings and transgressions that the transcultural subject develops a ‘supra-cultural’ creativity.

While brands have picked up on issues of ethnic diversity and cashed in on such heated conflicts by targeting the liberals, which, in essence, agitated the consumers espousing far-right ideals and intensified debates about the assimilation of

immigrants (Ulver & Laurell, 2020; Ulver, 2022; 2021). For instance, in Sweden, “the topic of ‘integration’ has never, in Swedish media history, been as discussed as now” (Ulver, 2021, p. 405). Discussion about Sweden’s lack of integration of immigrants—leading to more vulnerability—is a hot topic in the media (Hannah & Elving, 2021; Neuding, 2021; Puranen, 2021). A survey conducted by Eurobarometer (2018) reported that almost three-fourths of Swedes think that integration has been unsuccessful, and more than half believe that immigrants are a burden on the welfare system and lead to more crime in Sweden. Failed integration has led to tighter immigration policies and enforced cultural assimilation, such as learning the language, customs and values, skills, or assimilation into host cultural values and ideologies (Lesińska, 2014). A press release from the Ministry of Justice of the Government Offices of Sweden (2021b) highlighted how even the Social Democratic government intended to ‘tighten’ immigration policies to integrate immigrants and reduce their vulnerabilities. Speaking about the direction of their government’s policy, the newly elected Prime Minister from the Moderate Party asserted that “Sweden’s largest economic and social problems are due to high levels of immigration, in combination with failed integration”, and hence, they would make ‘immigration stricter’ and “amend the rules on civic orientation for newly arrived immigrants” (Government Offices of Sweden, 2022). While most studies within consumer research about nationalism and far-right ideologies have focused on consumer resistance and anti-consumption (Cambefort & Pecot, 2020; Pecot, Vasilopoulou & Cavallaro, 2021; Ulver & Laurell, 2020; Varman & Belk, 2009), the implication of such resurgence is more pervasive and has considerable implications on migration and gender.

## **Mainstreaming of Gender**

Gender is a central organising principle in today’s transcultural societies. It is so deeply entrenched in our worldview that it is often difficult to discern its impact (Shepherd & Hamilton, 2022). Dobscha (2019) indicated that 2018 was the tippingpoint when “gender has gone mainstream”. The European Union adopted gender mainstreaming as a strategy to espouse gender perspectives across policies, programmes and regulations to advocate gender equality and confront discrimination (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2022). Widespread debates about sexual harassment, the gender pay gap and other gender inequalities have dominated the mainstream discourses (Tissier-Desbordes & Visconti, 2019). Although it has become a heated and contested topic addressed—within media, pop culture, politics and policies—in more societal contexts today than ever before, it remains trivialised and has become a mere box to be ticked off (Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021). Moreover, gender and sexuality serve as the key marker of stigmatised and oppressive social representations (Eichert & Luedicke, 2022). In light of the ever-increasing importance as well as the trivialisation of gender, scholars (Coleman, Fischer & Zayer, 2021; Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021; Maclaran, Stevens & Kravets,

2022; Prothero & Tadajewski, 2021) have indicated the need for more research on gender in the marketplace.

Tracing the history of gender, social movements have been a precursor of ushering in varying degrees of social and political changes in societies (Taylor, Haider-Markel & Lewis, 2018). For quite some time now, at varying degrees in most societies, feminist movements have critically addressed the subversion of women to unmask and confront social inequalities arising from sexual stereotyping and for economic, social and political emancipation to give voice and equality to women in a society dominated by men (Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Bettany et al., 2010; Bristor & Fischer, 1993; de Beauvoir, 2011; Hirschman, 1993; Maclaran & Kravets, 2018; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). It is broadly accepted that today we are in the fourth wave of feminism, which can be attributed to the gradual development that can be traced back to the first waves of feminism during the 1850s with the women's suffragettes movements (Maclaran, 2015). Further discussions on feminism can be found in Chapter 2.

In recent times, predominantly in Western societal contexts, these movements were augmented and broadened by first with more discussions about sexuality—such as LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual) rights—followed by discussions about rights of a more wide variety of gender identities and inclusivity discourses—such as transgender and gender non-binary individuals—culminating in the manifestation of LGBTQIA<sup>4</sup> (Boyd et al., 2020; Tissier-Desbordes & Visconti, 2019; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). The visibility of LGBTQ+ movements can be traced back to the 1970s with the Stonewall riots in the US (Tissier-Desbordes & Visconti, 2019). This has culminated in more—than before—freedom and acceptance of an expansive assortment of gender identities in certain contexts. In these particular contexts, the socio-cultural landscape of gender today has become comparatively more fluid and nuanced than ever before as certain individuals are becoming more sensitive, aware and open towards including and accepting a more diverse range of gender and sexual identities and orientations (Coffin, Eichert & Nolke, 2019; Fisher, 2004; McNabb, 2018). Despite the acceptance of fluidity, gender is described in binary terms within marketing (Bettany et al., 2010). In those societies, this ongoing change effort ostensibly challenges to destabilise the social gender order or so it seems to some groups.

The increase in debates and discussions about gender is met with equally strong opposition by those holding a contrary viewpoint (Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021). Gender mainstreaming and equality projects have still not been successful in exterminating gender inequality (Caglar, 2013), and might have inadvertently fuelled anti-gender mobilisation (Rawłuszko, 2021). Akin to the anti-liberal

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<sup>4</sup> Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/sexual, those Questioning their gender and sexuality, Intersex, Asexual and a + that illustrates further varieties of gender and sexual identities. From here on, the term LGBTQ+ has been used to indicate the same.

backlash against migration and multiculturalism, a similar counter-movement has also been evident against gender, as highlighted earlier. The discourse of gender ideology, proliferating globally, has been termed as dangerous and deviant, for individuals and societies, by far/alt-right anti-liberals, conservative and religious actors (Butler, 2021; Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021). The language deployed by the Catholic Church and evangelical institutions, such as ‘the gender ideology’, gender theory and genderism, have been appropriated by these enthusiasts in many social contexts (Butler, 2021; Corredor, 2019; Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021). These advocates argue that young people engaging in activism or children are asked to alter their gender and sexuality, which can lead to a perverse and bestial society (Butler, 2021). According to Butler (2021) and Corredor (2019), in recent times, the anti-gender mobilisations against progressive social movements, such as feminist and LGBTQ+ movements, have been intensified with genderism being hijacked and paralleled with communism and totalitarianism.

Importantly, these ideological inducements are palpable in the marketplace. Being an ‘ideological conductor’, consumption enables ideological apparatuses (Althusser, 1971) to “construct and disseminate narratives that saturate everyday practices” (Bradshaw & Ostberg, 2019, p. 449). Certain brands are openly taking a stance, whether for their profit-motive or to advance the cause they believe in, by communicating gender-transgressive ideals through their marketing efforts such as advertising. Vredenburg et al. (2020, p. 444) postulated that “in today’s marketplace, consumers want brands to take a stand on socio-political issues”, which has led brands to engage in activism, which can be authentic or ‘woke washing’ to deceive consumers. Such movements by the neo-liberal market to appropriate progressive social movements have been characterised as co-optation within the consumer research literature (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). Co-optation of ideologies and political movements can engender depoliticising damages and divert attention from real socio-political shifts in society (Ulver, 2022). For instance, Veresiu and Giesler (2018) highlighted the commodification, fetishisation and exoticisation of ethnic consumer subjects.

Thus, brands have started co-opting gender-transgressive ideologies. Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018) discussed the ongoing ‘agender’ movement—or what I call gender transgressive—that aimed to change gender roles in societies by becoming genderless, without any gender identities at all, in effect revolutionising the meaning of being a man and a woman. They articulated agender as being genderless by altering and radically deconstructing the incumbent cultural gender codes. They argued that the recent agender movement—co-opted by fashion brands such as Prada, Zara, H&M, Diesel and Selfridges—was a major turnaround in society and highlighted that companies can benefit from the amputation of gender categories. In Sweden, “many brands are, for example, actively problematizing the traditional division of male and female fashion by introducing gender-neutral collections” (Ostberg, 2022, p. 230). The construct of gender in marketing, which



has been predominantly binary, is ongoing overhaul as representations of more neutral, fluid, inclusive, blurring and bending gender constructions have lately become visibly pronounced in marketing communication (Shahriar, 2018). This existence of a certain set of beliefs and ideals challenging conventional gender norms and values—gender-transgressive ideologies (Shahriar, 2021)—is played out in the marketplace.

Through their consumption, migrant consumers experience these instantiations of gender transgressive ideology co-opted by brands in the marketplace. Migrant consumers also come across these gender ideologies from another manifestation of marketplace resources, i.e., marketing communication. As consumers cross borders from a less gender-egalitarian culture to a more egalitarian one, how they navigate these gender-ideological influences in the marketplace remains unexplored. Hence, it is pivotal to gain more understanding of how immigrant consumers acculturate and navigate these diverse tensions of gender ideologies in the host marketplace.

## **Gendering of Migration**

As expressed in the beginning, it is important to understand gender in the context of immigrants. According to Fisher (2004), multiculturalism, as a result of migration, celebrates diversity and differences, which can be considered the epitome of progressive politics by its advocates and opponents. Hence, there are certain affinities between such multiethnicity and other social or political standpoints with analogous orientations, ideologies and objectives. She argued that one such compatibility of multiculturalism is with feminism because both stances highlight the importance of celebrating individual differences and idiosyncrasies, contesting oppression and injustice and facilitating the progress of marginalised groups from exclusion to inclusion. This goes on to show that gender and migration are inextricably intertwined. Immigrants often become a socially oppressed and stigmatised group (Eichert & Luedicke, 2022), not different from those vulnerable due to gender inequality. Therefore, understanding gender ideologies in the context of consumer acculturation are highly relevant in today's global consumer culture (Özçaglar-Toulouse & Peñaloza, 2011), and thus, needs to be investigated.

Gender equality and women's rights have been posited by some scholars as crucial in differentiating immigrant-receiving cultures in the Global North from immigrant minority cultures from the Global South (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014; Phillips & Saharso, 2008). With increased attention towards gender inequality among ethnic minorities in the immigrant-receiving Western cultures, some scholars have highlighted heated debates concerning oppression and controversial treatment of women among immigrants from patriarchal societies—such as women being forced to dress in certain ways and subjected to genital mutilation, coercing young girls to get married, domestic violence and killing for 'family honour'—in the name of religious and cultural differences (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014; Phillips, 2007).

However, scholars in migration and gender studies have argued that such essentialising representations of migrant women as victims of patriarchal cultures can be problematic and legitimise policy-makers to curb immigration with stricter border controls (Kofman, Saharso & Vacchelli, 2015). Nevertheless, it is pivotal to underline that in this study, I did not espouse such a contentious and essentialist perspective. Instead, I argue that this demonstrates the marginalisation and complexity some vulnerable immigrants might encounter in their host culture, and thus, illustrates the importance of understanding how respondents draw from a wide gamut of gender discourses in their ideological navigation.

## A Study in Consumer Culture Theory

This section problematises previous literature relevant to conducting this study. The study is positioned in and contributes to the domain of consumer research (a subdiscipline of marketing), and specifically, consumer culture theory—CCT (Arnould & Thompson, 2005) hereafter—which is also known as interpretive consumer research (Belk & Sobh, 2019). To formulate the research problem, I first delved into and uncovered the limitations within the literature streams of consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies respectively. Subsequently, studies at the nexus of gender and consumer acculturation, the subject area to which this study primarily contributes, were problematised. Finally, I noted certain limitations within the consumer research literature on religious ideologies and postcolonialism, which are not the primary focus of this study. Problematising these bodies of literature enabled the identification of certain imbalances and subsequently used to formulate the research question.

Studies on consumer acculturation have been on the rise with sustained interest from scholars in consumer research and CCT (for a review, see Luedicke, 2011). Influential acculturation studies within consumer research have explored the negotiation of cultural differences of migrant consumers through consumption practices (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Luedicke, 2011; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Consumer acculturation studies have primarily focused on migrant consumers' identity projects during their transition highlighting institutional acculturation agents, discursive elements and various outcomes of the process of acculturation (Luedicke, 2011). Various migration antecedents were discussed by Peñaloza (1994), the acculturation processes and influences were portrayed—such as cultural discourses of the home culture, host culture and the global consumer culture as well as acculturation agents—by Peñaloza (1994), Oswald (1999) and Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), various socio-cultural conditions that structure their acculturation were emphasised by Üstüner and Holt (2007), and finally, a wide range of identity positions or outcomes were put forth by various scholars (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard,

2005; Chytкова, 2011; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). However, rarely any of these studies have looked into ideological influences that shape these acculturation processes and outcomes. While previous studies have mentioned discursive and ideological tensions between home and host cultures in immigrant acculturation (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), their focus has been on migrant consumers' identity projects rather than understanding how these migrant consumers navigate these ideological conflicts.

Within gender literature in consumer research, scholars have long investigated how gender structures consumption choices (Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Dobscha & Ozanne, 2001; Fischer & Arnold, 1990; Thompson, 1996; Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1990). Over the past few years, there has been a surge of interest in studies exploring gender in the marketplace (Bettany et al., 2010; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Moisio, Arnould & Gentry, 2013; Gentry & Harrison, 2010; Avery, 2012; Zayer et al., 2012; Klasson & Ulver, 2015). Consumer researchers have also investigated gender constructions in advertising (Gentry & Harrison, 2010; Maclaran & Stevens, 2009; Patterson & Elliott, 2002; Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004; Stevens & Ostberg, 2011). However, gender scholars (Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021; Fischer, 2015; Hearn & Hein, 2015; Maclaran, 2015) have argued that studies within marketing and consumer research on gender issues remain marginal and called for adopting a more nuanced, culture-historically-embedded and socio-politically-charged viewpoint—by espousing feminist theorising—to understand the complex and multifaceted nature of reproduction of gender inequalities in transcultural contexts.

Looking into the ideology literature, consumers today encounter ideological conflicts as they incessantly receive contesting signals in the marketplace (Hemetsberger, 2006; Luedicke & Giesler, 2008). Consumer researchers have presented how ideological conflicts, complexities and contradictions are negotiated through (anti)consumption practices (Jafari et al., 2015; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Sandıkcı & Ger, 2007; Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Haytko, 1997; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Nevertheless, although studies in CCT have interrogated conflicting ideologies in the marketplace (Holt, 2002; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012), only a handful of studies have explored gender ideologies in the marketplace (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019). Molander (2021) underscored the importance of investigating gender ideologies in the marketplace, particularly in Sweden where the interaction between contesting gender ideologies—a progressive state ideology of gender equality and a traditional marketplace ideology—in the marketplace structures consumption and demonstrated the “interplay and tensions between ideology and everyday life” (p. 194). However, such interplay and negotiation of tensions become more complex with immigrants coming with more diverse ideological backgrounds.

Yet, these scholars have not explored the multiplicity of gender ideologies moving beyond the patriarchal–egalitarian dichotomy.

Within the nexus of consumer acculturation and gender, only a few scholars have explored both themes concurrently (Chytкова, 2011; Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Most studies focus on the construction of gender identities by ethnic minorities and immigrants—from Asia or Mexico in the U.S., U.K. and several European countries such as France and Italy—similar to most consumer acculturation studies within the domain, which also focus primarily on the construction of hybrid identities. Especially interesting for this study are the works of Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytкова (2011) that touch upon the tensions that migrant consumers encounter due to a difference in gender ideologies in the host culture from their home culture when negotiating their identities.

These studies have investigated female immigrants as minorities whose gender ideologies are divergent from the dominant culture (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Üstüner and Holt (2007) argued that migrant women negotiate home and host cultures to form hybrid identities within particular socio-cultural structures, that construct their acculturation. Similarly, Chytкова (2011) indicated that immigrant women's understanding of home and host cultures and their formation of hybrid gender identities are informed by gender discourses of both cultures. Both studies brought up how migrant consumers negotiate their gender identities, informed by dichotomous gender discourses from their home and host cultures. They depicted a conflict between the traditional—patriarchal or less equal—and the more modern Western liberal version of gender ideologies. Hence, it can be argued that limited attention has been paid to exploring the navigation of contesting gender ideologies informed by multifarious discourses. Thus, a more varied and nuanced depiction of gender ideologies is necessary to reflect the diversity of gender discourses that not only emanate from home and host cultures, but also from other influences such as religious or transcultural ones.

Üstüner and Holt (2007) argued that migrant women can shape their identity projects in specific socio-cultural contexts—where minority cultures have been co-opted by the market for the host culture—and their socio-economic conditions—their social, economic and cultural capital—to engage in consumption practices in the host culture, which otherwise results in the marginalisation of those women. This was disputed by Chytкова (2011) who counteracted that despite differences in the socio-cultural contexts and socio-economic conditions—where the minority culture has not been commodified and the migrants lack sufficient capital—immigrant women can craft hybrid identities with marketplace-mediated resources. While both findings indicated the persistence of divergent gender ideologies that inform migrant women's acculturation, they focused on the hybrid identity formation of these migrants rather than on interrogating how immigrants navigate such conflicting ideological tensions. CCT scholars have argued that research within the discipline should move beyond understanding consumers' lived experiences and

explore consumer navigations of ideology (Cronin & Fitchett, 2022). To ameliorate such imbalances, this study explores how migrant consumers navigate across various ideological conflicts related to gender in the marketplace.

A corpus of studies has investigated the confluence of religious ideologies in the nexus of globalisation, neo-liberal ideologies, politics and consumer culture (Sandıkcı & Jafari, 2013; Izberk-Bilgin, 2015; Ger, 2013). Scholars have also worked at nexus of religious ideologies, gender and consumerism (Üstüner & Holt, 2007; Yaqin, 2007), and even at the intersection of capitalism, political tensions and historical structures (Sandıkcı & Ger, 2007; 2010). Hirschman, Ruvio and Touzani (2011) indicated that research focusing on religious ideologies tends to study religion within a dominant cultural context where it is the predominant religion informing consumer ideologies. They argued that such an emphasis on the dominant culture can obfuscate diverse and nuanced interactions between the marketplace and religious ideologies within diasporic communities. Hence, there is an opportunity to understand the influences of religion that is not dominant in a given cultural context. Understanding the influences of religion on gender discourse would also shed light on the multifacetedness of gender ideologies.

Although studies in consumer research are dominated by theorisation from the context of the Global North (Coffin et al., 2022), consumer acculturation studies have also looked into the colonial aspect of migrant consumers (Mehta & Belk, 1991; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Fernandez, Veer & Lastovicka, 2011; Hu, Whittler & Tian, 2013; Olivotti, 2016; Veresiu & Giesler, 2018; Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004). They have explored consumers migrating from colonised countries—Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Iran and Hongkong—to colonising nations, mostly from the U.K and the U.S. While some of these studies have looked into Muslim consumers (Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Sobh, Belk & Wilson, 2013), prior acculturation research in CCT has rarely examined them from a perspective of gender ideologies. I, therefore, explored migrant consumers acculturating from the South Asian Muslim country of Bangladesh in their dominant host culture of Sweden to understand how such contesting gender ideologies are navigated. This is an under-studied yet increasingly important new migrant group.

## Research Question

To redress the aforementioned asymmetries within the literature of consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies, this research aimed to *understand how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies in the host cultural marketplace*. This was studied by inquiring South Asian migrant consumers in Sweden. Participants from the Bangladeshi diaspora in Sweden were interviewed to understand how they navigate diverse gender ideologies within the Swedish

marketplace. Sweden, in this instance, acts as a Global North and Western liberal context. With its polarised political tensions about immigration, an ethnically diverse population and more transgressive gender ideologies, Sweden is an excellent context to understand conflicting gender ideologies in the marketplace. This investigation, therefore, looked at how migrant consumers, coming from a distinct society with a certain set of ideological structures, interpret, accept and resist gender-related messages emanating from the marketplace alien to their native cultural setting.

In their study of how South Asian women ‘navigate’ border crossings in the UK between various contexts, Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004, p. 232) indicated that migrant consumers can be “regarded as cultural navigators with a well-developed ability to manoeuvre their way in a complex and contradictory world by adapting behaviour and consumption practices”. In a similar vein, in this study, I view ‘navigation’ as respondents’ ways of traversing and finding their way around in their acculturation drawing from multifarious discourses on gender. Respondents were interviewed to understand their cultural practices and views about gender relations through their narratives about consumption and marketing communication. Gender-transgressive advertisements were used as prompts to elicit responses from interviewees. This study, therefore, aimed to understand how migrant consumers draw on contesting discourses about gender to navigate their acculturation using marketplace resources.

## **Research Contributions and Implications**

The global flows of people have increased in recent times, and the psychological, cultural and political impact of immigrants on themselves and the recipient societies are profound, which makes it important to study the intricacies of consumer acculturation (Berry, 2019). “Consumer acculturation research has generated a wealth of knowledge useful for theoreticians, marketers, politicians, and social activists that seek to better understand, and potentially act upon, the lifeworlds of migrant consumers under diverse socio-cultural conditions” (Luedicke, 2011, p. 224). This section discusses the aimed theoretical contributions and practical implications of this study.

### **Aimed Theoretical Contributions**

In terms of expanding our theoretical understanding, this study aimed to contribute to the literature streams of consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies, within the disciplinary field of culturally oriented consumer research (CCT). First, this research aimed to expand our theoretical understanding of consumer acculturation

by providing an understanding of consumers' ideological navigation that can complement the more investigated knowledge pertaining to identity negotiation found within the consumer acculturation literature (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). This study intended to specifically contribute to our understanding of gender in consumer acculturation (Chytкова, 2011; Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) by advancing knowledge on migrant consumers' navigation of higher-level gender ideologies. By adopting a transculturation perspective by Ortiz (1995 [1940]), the study offers an alternative way to understand consumer acculturation and gender. Another envisaged enrichment is to improve our understanding of the market-mediated commodification of immigrants (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018) and co-optation (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007) of gender transgression (Shahriar, 2021; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018), aided by neo-liberal (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014; Veresiu & Giesler, 2018) and transcultural practices (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005). An additional appendage to the literature is CCT studies on political conflicts through investigation of conflicts emerging from geo-political tensions (Ulver, 2022; 2021; Ulver & Laurell, 2020) due to immigration.

Second, the study also aimed to contribute to gender perspectives in the marketplace (Gentry & Harrison, 2010; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Klasson & Ulver, 2015; Moisio, Arnould & Gentry, 2013; Ostberg, 2019; 2022), specifically by expanding our understanding of diverse gender ideologies. While the existing understanding of gender ideologies has been framed in a dichotomy of patriarchal and egalitarian discourses (Chytкова, 2011; Molander, 2021; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), this study aimed to explore more diverse forms of gender discourses (Shahriar, 2021)—posed by gender inclusivity (Arsel, Crockett & Scott, 2021), gender neutrality (Bettany et al., 2010), gender fluidity (Zayer et al., 2012), agender (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018), metrosexual (Ostberg, 2012), androgynous (Thompson & Haytko, 1997), gender-bending (Avery, 2012; Sandhu, 2017) and gender-blending discourses (Stevens & Ostberg, 2011)—by studying them. Additionally, the research intended to expand our understanding of ideologies (Chatzidakis, Maclaran & Varman, 2021)—specifically contesting gender ideologies in the marketplace (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019)—to complement existing knowledge of such negotiation with more complex navigation because immigrants draw from diverse gender discourses. Moreover, it aimed to expand our knowledge of religious ideologies (Hirschman, Ruvio & Touzani, 2011; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Sandıkcı & Ger, 2010), particularly how it is interwoven into gender discourses.

## **Aimed Practical Implications**

In terms of practical implications, this study can be helpful for consumers, market actors and society. The findings can help the policy-makers—particularly in Sweden, but also in similar Nordic, European and Western contexts—to gain an enhanced understanding of gender-related conflicts of immigrants—mostly from Muslim countries with large ideological differences—in the marketplace and consumption practices. Although consumption is seemingly only a small part of people’s lives, because we live in a consumer society (Sassatelli, 2007), we can unpack many general tendencies by exploring consumption. There have been frenzied policy debates about failed integration in Swedish society and subsequent segregation, unrest and violence (Malmberg, Andersson & Östh, 2013). Because these immigrants come from diverse socio-historical and culture-ideological backgrounds, understanding the navigation of such discursive tensions can equip public policy-makers with expanded knowledge to assuage conflicts, although related only to gender in the marketplace. Therefore, this study could elevate our understanding of the unintended consequences for societies and consumer cultures of gender-related conflicts between immigrants and majority residents in the consumer culture. This could contribute to advancing knowledge, shifting conversations and resources and inciting actions towards change at a macro level. However, it should be noted that in the holistic macro context, this study is only a very small piece of the larger puzzle.

Market actors’ co-optation of gender-transgressive ideologies through marketplace resources were described as evoking inclusiveness, egalitarianism and challenging gender roles in society (Shahriar, 2021). However, critiques have posed such commodification as the capitalist dissemination of Western perspectives through neo-liberal governmentality (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014). Accordingly, this study intended to shed light on marketplace communication and commodification of the ‘Other’—immigrants and gender transgressors—for market actors and consumers and highlight the injustice of the marginalised consumers who espouse diverse gender views and beliefs. Researchers have discussed gender neutrality and called for market actors to adopt a more gender-neutral and less gender-stereotypical depiction in the marketplace to reflect changing gender norms in Western societies, which can redress the impact of these normative masculinities on male consumers (Bettany et al., 2010; Gentry & Harrison, 2010). However, in consumer research, our understanding of gender-transgressive ideologies, particularly in the marketplace, in the context of consumer acculturation is limited. This omission is important to address because it can shed light on the “complex and multi-layered nature of gender inequalities” (Fischer, 2015, p. 1719) and uncover interactions between various discursive elements (Luedicke, 2011) and gender.



## Outline of the Book

The overall structure of this dissertation comprises eight chapters. In this initial chapter, the research was introduced, followed by arguments demonstrating the importance of conducting this study, including issues of gender and migration, and the importance of navigating conflicts within acculturation. Subsequently, the research problem was formulated by positioning the study—in the literature streams of consumer acculturation and gender within the discipline of culturally oriented consumer research—and problematising existing literature within consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies, leading to the construction of the research question. The chapter ended with the articulation of aimed theoretical and practical contributions.

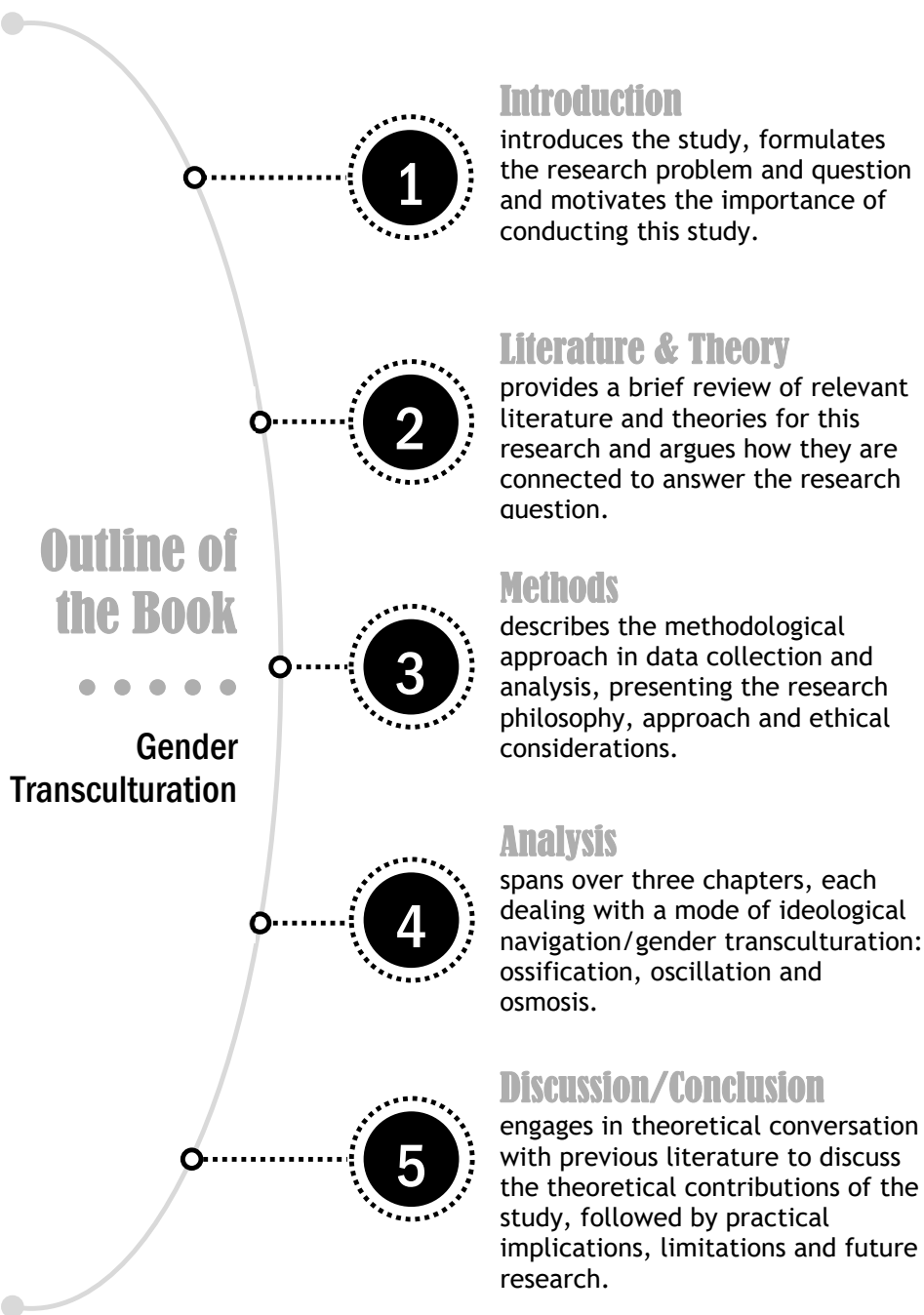
The next chapter looks at the prior theoretical and literature streams—germane to this study—on consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies. I reviewed and problematised existing scholarship within these three streams of literature and identified theoretical perspectives relevant to understand this study. A tapestry of treatises was developed as consumer acculturation and gender ideologies were decussated. Four ideal types of gender ideologies were identified from previous literature to construct an analytical framework. The notion of transculturation that “expresses the process of transition from one culture to another” (Ortiz, 1995 [1940], p. 102) was borrowed and coalesced with our existing understanding of consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies to conceptualise gender transculturation as *how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies*.

The succeeding chapter describes my research philosophy, research approach and methods used in this study. A vivid description of the collection and analysis of empirical materials were provided. The study was conducted primarily through in-depth interviews of 25 Bangladeshi immigrants in Sweden to understand respondents’ discourses and uncover their underlying ideologies. The chapter also highlights ethical considerations pertaining to data collection and processing. It ends with the process of analysis, adapted from Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), Spiggle (1994) and Thompson (1997).

The subsequent three chapters present the findings and interpretations of this research. I analysed the cultural views and beliefs about gender relations that respondents expressed through the interviews. The three analysis chapters thus, focus on how respondents from Bangladesh in Sweden navigated contesting ideological tensions in the marketplace in three modes of gender transculturation: ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis. Each of these three chapters depicts the narratives of how these informants drew from various gender discourses and how their ideological conflicts were manifested through their views and beliefs about gender relations in terms of consumption and marketplace resources. First, I drew on the notion of ideological ossification from previous literature (Chatzidakis,

Maclaran & Varman, 2021; Zwick, 2018) to demonstrate how participants' ideologies became rigid towards patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies and resistant towards egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. The chapter on ideological oscillation (Molander, 2021; Žižek, 2005) narrates the story of blending various gender discourses through retaining patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies and reworking egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Finally, ideological osmosis (Gibson & Papa, 2000; Li, 2012) depicts how informants romanticised and reflected on gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies and rejected patriarchal gender ideologies.

The following chapter ties the analysis from the three preceding chapters and constructs the model of gender transculturation, building on the analytical framework constructed in the second chapter. This is followed by discussions and theoretical contributions of this study. The final conclusion chapter discusses the practical implications and limitations of this study and potential future research opportunities. The outline of the book is depicted in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1 Outline of the Dissertation**

Eight chapters comprise the composition of this research, excluding references and appendices.

# A Tapestry of Treatises

Running a fine-toothed comb through the dusty closets of literature, this chapter provides a brief review of the literature and theoretical constructs relevant to this study. The chapter is divided into four parts: (1) gender, (2) ideologies, (3) consumer acculturation and (4) quilting the theoretical tapestry.

The first section provides insight into gender. It is pivotal to have an understanding of the concept of gender—its history and evolution—and how it has been presented in previous research to understand contesting gender ideologies that migrant consumers navigate. Hence, this chapter commences with a brief review and history of gender and consumption—which is the foundation of the core subject of this study—followed by literature on gender studies within consumer research and CCT.

The second section of this chapter provides inroads into the notion of ideologies. To understand how consumers navigate conflicting gender ideologies in their acculturation, it is essential to review previous literature to discern how conflicting gender ideologies have been studied by other scholars. The section also provides an understanding of discourses steeped in ideologies. Understanding discourses is relevant because I examined consumer discourses to interpret their views and beliefs on gender in this research.

The third section takes a look at prior studies on consumer acculturation. Consumer acculturation is the primary body of literature to which this study contributes, and hence, this review provides the reader with the rudimentary knowledge necessary to understand the phenomenon studied. The section begins by delineating the concept of consumer acculturation, followed by an exploration of consumer acculturation scholarship within the consumer research domain. Previous CCT scholarship on gender in consumer acculturation, where this study is positioned, was reviewed to lend an understanding required for the analysis of this research.

The final part of this chapter conceptualises gender transculturation and frames the theoretical departure of this study. The section begins with an exposition of the necessity to adopt transculturation as a concept over multiculturalism and acculturation. The notion of gender transculturation is then conceptualised by borrowing the concept of transculturation from the work of Fernando Ortiz. Four ideal types of gender ideologies are identified from the existing corpus of literature to construct the analytical framework of the study. The chapter ends with quilting a tapestry of treatises.

# Gender

This first sub-section of this section provides a conceptual grounding in gender necessary to understand how gender is used in this research. It begins with the definition and evolution of gender as a concept in academic literature, followed by a brief review of feminism and gender equality movements that paved the way for gender transgression and subsequently narrates the recent rise of gender transgression. The second part of this section showcases debates on gender and multiculturalism. The next component in this section looks into how gender has become an integral part of consumer culture. This is followed by the final two subsequent subsections on exploring gender studies within the domain of consumer research and CCT. First, gender studies in marketing and consumer research are reviewed, followed by studies in CCT on masculinities with a theoretical understanding of masculinities in the social gender order. Understanding these theoretical accounts and previous literature, within the field to which this study contributes, is important because they provide a necessary grounding to explore contesting gender ideologies in the marketplace. The final element of this section summarises and briefly problematises gender literature within CCT to set the stage for this study.

## A Brief History of Gender

### *A Discovery of Gender*

The concept of gender has its roots in the notion of sex. *Sex* is a biological concept that refers to a person's physiological status based on their anatomy and is usually categorised as male, female or intersex (Bristor & Fischer, 1993). Sex is understood as the biological makeup and distinction of male/female—but does not coincide with gender identity/role, yet grounds them—whereas *gender* is associated with the activities, behaviours and roles that a given society deems appropriate for men and women (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). In 1949, Margaret Mead first used the notion of 'sex roles' to introduce the element of socially expected behaviour that, coupled with learning from anthropological and medical conversations, paved the way to conceptualise gender (McNabb, 2018). In their seminal work, writing about intersex children, John Money and his colleagues first used 'gender' as an 'outlook', 'demeanour' and 'orientation' (McNabb, 2018). However, feminist philosopher Anne Oakley introduced the term 'gender' in sociology in 1972 to distinguish between the biologically constructed sex and socially and culturally constructed gender (Bettany et al., 2010). While sex depends on biological makeup, gender is more socio-culturally constructed and does not necessarily have to be related to a person's anatomy.

Gender is “a social concept referring to psychologically, sociologically, or culturally rooted traits, attitudes, beliefs, and behavioural tendencies” (Bristor & Fischer, 1993). It is a fusion of chromosomes, anatomy, hormones, gametes, psychology, environment, upbringing, education and culture (Henig, 2017; Mardell, 2016). Social norms, historical contexts and ideologies concoct a shared meaning around gender (Dobscha, 2019). According to Mardell (2016):

In the context of individual self, gender is the state of being a man, a woman, both, neither, somewhere in between, or something entirely different. In the context of society, gender is a system of classification rooted in social ideas about masculinity and femininity.

Individuals are gendered through various roles, stereotypes, socio-cultural institutions and media (Kacen, 2000). Robert Stoller and Ralph Greenson first differentiated between gender roles as behaviour and gender identity as feelings (McNabb, 2018). *Gender roles* describe masculine or feminine behaviours in accordance with societal norms, which can be quite variable (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). A person’s *gender identity* is their feelings, their “internalised, deeply felt sense of being male, female, both, or neither”, or combinations of these, including androgynous or transgender<sup>5</sup>, is an essential part of “who people know themselves to be” (Brill, 2008, p. 4; Hines, 2018, p. 10; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). On the contrary, *gender expression* is “the manifestation of one’s gender”, meaning how a person presents and externalises their gender to the world—encompassing “everything that communicates our gender to others: clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, how we speak, how we play and our social interactions and roles”, our behaviour, discourses, language and other symbols—and “how the world interacts with and shapes their gender” (Brill, 2008, p. 4; Henig, 2017; Hines, 2018, p. 10; Mardell, 2016, p. 4; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). While it diverges culturally, the most commonly used presentations are masculine and feminine. *Sexuality* refers to sexual orientation<sup>6</sup> (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). While the distinctions between sex, sexuality and gender (roles, identity and expression) provide a rudimentary understanding of gender, it is pivotal to delve into feminism to truly fathom discourses about gender.

### ***An Overview of Feminism and Gender Equality Movements***

The concept of gender ideology was constructed from “the study of gender and feminist considerations of political ideology” (Duerst-Lahti, 2008, p. 160). Feminism is a movement that attempts to critically confront the subversion of women in society to combat social inequalities arising from sexual stereotyping and

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<sup>5</sup> A person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the sex assigned to them at birth.

<sup>6</sup> To whom a person is attracted to, usually expressed through LGBTQIA+.

give voice to women for economic, social and political emancipation, so that patriarchal society treats men and women as equals (de Beauvoir, 2011; Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Hirschman, 1993; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Scholarships on feminism attempted to unmask and confront social inequalities arising from such stereotyping and give voice to women (Bettany et al., 2010). While organised Western feminist movements can be traced back to as early as the 1840s, more contemporary movements emerged in the early twentieth century (Scott, 2005). Historically, feminist movements can be dissected into the following waves: (1) the first wave was all about early suffragettes and women's rights to vote and own property in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; (2) the second wave (1960s-1980s) was concerned with women's role in the family and their emancipation to achieve equality in legal and socio-cultural spheres; (3) moving on from white-middle-class women, the third wave, dawning in the 1990s, used post-structuralism to combat the negligence of the second wave to depict a more inclusive, pervasive, broad and nuanced ideological representation; (4) some scholars have ushered in an ongoing fourth wave (2010s-) with a fresh feminist zeitgeist, focusing on women empowerment driven by tech-savvy young activists that fuses micro-politics with an agenda of change (Hewitt, 2012; Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006; Maclaran, 2015; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). According to Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018), during the second wave, feminists accused marketers of reinforcing many negative stereotypes of women, particularly through passive and decorative portrayals of women in advertisements.

While feminist and gender research gained traction in social science during the 1960s and 1970s, it started to trickle down in marketing in 1985, and significantly in 1993 (Bettany et al., 2010; Maclaran & Stevens, 2019). Bristor and Fischer (1993) highlighted the implications of feminism and gender in consumer research and argued that there are several political positions in feminism existing concurrently, all of which are diverse and some are even incommensurable. They discussed three primary forms of feminism. Gender scholars (cf. Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018) have discussed various forms of feminist perspectives such as liberal, radical, Marxist/socialist, post-structuralist/post-modern, post-colonial, ecofeminism and queer theory. Relevant to this study is post-structural feminism which takes its departure in discourse and language and presupposes, mediates and constructs gender in binary oppositions to challenge such discursive reproductions and sensitise society to gender as multiple. Stern (1993) argued how post-modern feminism can expose the binarism of gender roles depicted in advertising. An overview of major feminist perspectives is presented in Appendix A, but it is beyond the scope of this study to explore them in detail. Nonetheless, two major works with two diverse perspectives are relayed hereafter.

First published in 1949, *The Second Sex* by Simone de Beauvoir (2011) marks the transition from first to second-wave feminism. She opined how women were subjugated and oppressed as the 'other' in societies with no real socio-cultural

power. She primarily argued that biology, psychoanalysis and historical materialism could not account for women's subordinate position in society. de Beauvoir (2011) painted a historical picture of women's maltreatment and oppression, starting from primitive societies to her time, in the domain of reproduction, sexuality and labour. Her work underscored how male power and women's marginalisation are built on culturally mythical representations, which depict women in a subdued way and impact their social standings in daily life. Presenting various stages of a woman's lived experience, de Beauvoir (2011) demonstrated how a woman is not born feminine but becomes one, as they are refused creative fulfilment and provided a limited role in society, making them feel inferior, inessential and incomplete. She articulated how different women react to their positions and various situations and subsequently develop coping mechanisms, such as giving up or continuing to serve their family, buttressing their dependence. de Beauvoir (2011) concluded with indications of the early resurgence of emancipation and hope for egalitarianism. However, such gender imbalances are still pervasive.

Furthermore, Linda Scott (2005) postulated that feminists need to reconsider their anti-beauty ideology to be more inclusive. Using articles and advertisements as artefacts, she looked at the complicated negotiations between fashion and feminism in the United States for over a century in socio-political and culture-historical contexts, starting from fashion and women's dress codes during the days of Victoria Woodhull. She argued that dressing up, using makeup, or being successful and economically empowered did not correspond to the anti-fashion sentiment of feminism stemming from upper-class Puritans. She narrated a historical narrative of a strong aversion to artifice and woman's moral policing of those who did not fit this mould. However, Scott (2005) indicated that fashion is not a tool of patriarchal oppression to dupe women; rather, it is an instrument of self-expression and identity crafting. Studying how many early feminist discourses problematised beauty and fashion, she argued that focusing on beauty and appearance does not negate feminism. She emphasised that fashion has enabled women's economic liberation, rather than curtailing it. She highlighted that these successful and working women have played their part in advancing feminist causes and reasoned that the role commerce, marketing and media—particularly women's magazines and advertisements—played should be championed.

Mainstream feminism can often contradict LGBT movements; for instance, it has been at daggers drawn with the lesbian subculture (Scott, 2005). However, in many ways, feminism has paved the way for today's gender-transgressive movement, as both challenge the cultural hegemony of the patriarchal society, to which I shift my gaze next.

### ***The Rise of Gender Transgression***

We are in the middle of a cultural shift, propelled by young people who are more open-minded and passionate about politics and have views and interests that have



taken major strides from traditional norms and values (Norris, 2003). According to many scholars, a cross-section of young people—liberal-minded, primarily in certain urban Western contexts—contests rigid gender roles. They dress the way they like, are indifferent to societal condemnation and more likely to support their non-binary peers (McNabb, 2018). They are embracing self-expression as a vehicle to enjoy their identity and individuality by increasingly expanding and experimenting with the boundaries of traditional gender identities<sup>7</sup> and sexual orientation<sup>8</sup>, resulting in the emergence of a wide range of identity labels that people use to refer to themselves (Johnson, 2016; Jourian, 2015; McNabb, 2018; Richards, Bouman & Barker, 2017). When it comes to gender and sexuality, there is an increasing number of gender non-conforming young individuals in contemporary Western societies who publicly reject dichotomous gender constructions, demand to be identified outside the binary and advocate for policy-based changes pertaining to this (Risman, 2018). Scholars (Jones, 2018; McNabb, 2018) have argued that today's youth, in certain contexts, are upending gender norms, exploring gender expression and championing gender fluidity without necessarily identifying themselves as non-binary.

In recent years, there has been a surge in ideologies embracing non-binary gender identification (Twist & de Graaf, 2019). The umbrella term *non-binary* or *genderqueer*—coined by Wilchins (1997)—refers to those who “disrupt the gender dichotomy [...] challenging its very ontology”, and have overlaps of gender identity (pangender), more than one gender (androgynous/mixed-gender), no gender (agender/non-gendered/genderless), fluctuating gender identity by moving between genders (gender-fluid), or a third gender (Brill, 2008; Richards et al., 2016, pp. 95-6). This refers to those who identify themselves “as being a combination of male and female, shifting between male and female, or off the male-female continuum altogether” (McNabb, 2018, p. xv). Bilodeau and Renn (2005) identified several scholars, such as Judith Butler, who advocate for fluid gender identities:

As alternatives to binary gender identity constructions and related oppressive systems, a number of feminist, postmodern, and queer theorists posit transgender identities and gender fluidity as normative and cite as evidence centuries of global traditions of gender-nonconforming identities.

Non-binary and transgender people have recently gained ‘heightened’ popularity and more visibility in media, pop culture and politics thanks to the dispersal power and reach of the Internet and social media (McNabb, 2018; Richards, Bouman & Barker, 2017). The gender-transgressive movement is proliferated by pop-culture

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<sup>7</sup> E.g., transgender, cisgender, genderqueer, agender, intergender, non-binary, gender fluid, genderqueer, pangender, gender expansive, bigender, polygender, demiboy, demigirl, neutrois, aporagender, lunagender, etc.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, polysexual, queer, etc.

celebrities such as musicians, actors, models and high-profile transgender people (McNabb, 2018). Bruce Jenner's public transition to Caitlyn, when she changed her gender and identified herself as transgender, indicated the coming out of an acceptance of gender fluidity and garnered considerable media attention (Beemyn & Eliason, 2016; Richards, Bouman & Barker, 2017). When Miley Cyrus claimed she did not want to be labelled as a boy or girl and identified herself as pansexual, it became a top searched term on Google (Belous & Bauman, 2017; Richards, Bouman & Barker, 2017). British androgynous actor Tilda Swinton has played roles of males and females in mainstream movies (McNabb, 2018). Additionally, celebrities<sup>9</sup> are also further pushing the gender envelope and consolidating the voice of the LGBTQ+ community (McNabb, 2018; Richards, Bouman & Barker, 2017). Such mainstream representations improve acceptance of gender and sexual fluidity (Boyd et al., 2020; Grau & Zotos, 2016). Representation of non-binary identities is increasingly seeping into even popular and scholarly media (McNabb, 2018). This has also been reflected in academic discourses. However, academic research exploring gender inclusivity has not gained the same traction as it has done in mainstream media such as television, film, advertising and social media (Boyd et al., 2020). Sandhu (2017) argued that

Societies are progressively permitting the deconstruction of traditional definitions of gender and increasingly becoming tolerant of gender identities that do not coincide with conventional meanings of masculinity or femininity. The consequent social license to experiment with one's gender identity has made the gender identities of the current generation significantly more fluid than that of the earlier generations.

The post-millennial generation, growing up idolising stars like Lucky Blue Smith and Ruby Rose, are even more inclined to not let gender and other social norms define their identity (Jones, 2018; Duguay, 2016). In 2014, Facebook introduced a custom list of over 50 gender options for users to choose from and added a 'gender neutral' option for each possible relationship to describe family members as nonbinary (Bivens & Haimson, 2016). LinkedIn, recently, enabled the addition of gender pronouns (such as he/him, she/her, they/them) of user profiles, so as to enable users to identify and express their gender on the workplace social media. This shift in how people are increasingly identifying and expressing themselves signposts an inclusive attitude towards gender, which appears to be an organic outgrowth of a changing perception in society at large, particularly amongst young people (Anderson, 2010; Taylor, Haider-Markel & Lewis, 2018). According to McNabb (2018), more and more nonbinary individuals are 'coming out' and orienting themselves with nonbinary politics, and this burgeoning media representation of nonbinary people is—although to a very little extent—somewhat

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<sup>9</sup> Actors such as Laverne Cox, Jaden Smith and Ruby Rose, musicians David Bowie and Prince and fashionistas Alok Vaid-Menon and Jacob Tobia.

beginning to normalise the idea of gender nonconformity. This evolving ideology of gender transgression indicates acceptance of a more diverse and fluid sexual and gender identities (Boyd et al., 2020), within certain contexts, among even those outside the cohort. Dobscha and Ostberg (2021) pointed out that gender is such a contested subject matter that its growing attention and discussion is faced with increased resistance. Therefore, despite the growing sentiments and initiatives to advocate gender equality and transgression, this is still merely a movement against the dominant social gender order, since gender inequality remains pervasive (Caglar, 2013). And this is perhaps exacerbated with an increasing backlash against such gender.

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## **Gender and Multiculturalism**

Röder and Mühlau (2014) argued that immigrants hailing from home countries with gender egalitarian ideologies find it difficult to accommodate to higher gender egalitarianism advocated by the majority residents in the host country. Although their gender ideologies tend to become more equal over time—particularly across

the following generations—women acculturate within the first generation more than men. While previously I highlighted the ‘affinity’ between multiculturalism and feminism, Okin (1999) negated this compatibility and highlighted the tensions between these two stances, arguing that policies of multi-culturalism can often be anti-feminist. In her disquisition ‘*Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*’, the political theorist Okin (1999) critiqued Will Kymlicka’s policies and underlined the conflict between the minority culture’s norms and ideologies with gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies of the majority culture. She argued that liberal states, in an attempt to conserve and acknowledge the diversity of the minority culture, accept the dominant cultural ideals and practices of the minority culture including religious ideologies, although certain particularities—such as those within the domestic sphere—can be damaging to gender equality. Okin (1999, p. 23) argued that “establishing group rights to enable some minority cultures to preserve themselves may not be in the best interests of the girls and women of those cultures, even if it benefits the men”. She called for the reappraisal of multicultural policies advocating diversity of minority cultures to consider the inequalities of genders within those marginal groups because they are less discernible in the private sphere. Okin’s (1999) essay received widespread acclaim and criticism.

While some proponents agreed with her that the malleability of cultures and religion should be adjusted to the morality of gender equality, other advocates indicated that Okin’s (1999) focus on gender structures is arbitrary, as any group marginalising any form of rights within their culture should be denounced (Cohen, Howard & Nussbaum, 1999). Some opponents argued that it is parochial to necessitate cultures and religions to advocate gender equality and sanction special rights for that. Other opponents indicated her judgemental position highlighting her ignorance of cultural differences and her presumption about the ideal normative structure of neo-liberal societies (Cohen, Howard & Nussbaum, 1999; Fisher, 2004). Bhabha (1999, p. 80), for instance, suggested that while Okin (1999) started by contesting multiculturalism with feminism, she gradually ended up adjudicating minority cultures from a Western neo-liberal context. According to Bhabha (1999, p. 82):

For an argument that rightly suggests that we should take our moral and political bearings from the “internal differences” that mediate power relations within communities, Okin’s (1999) casts a gaze on “non-Western” peoples that comes resolutely from above and elsewhere. Her version of liberal feminism shares something of the patronizing and stereotyping attitudes of the patriarchal perspective.

Addressing Okin’s (1999) critique, Kymlicka (1999) concurred with Okin (1999) that neo-liberal multiculturalism, when advocating minority group rights, should take into account intra-group inequalities, such as gender. However, he affirmed his original position that multiculturalism and feminism can go hand-in-hand to consolidate gender inclusion, as addressing injustice among groups is equally important as addressing those within. Okin’s (1999) work has resulted in one of the

most controversial debates within acculturation studies concerning the gender-differentiated 'Western' perspective, and such contradiction within the literature needs to be addressed.

## **A Chronicle of Gender and Consumption**

According to Roberts (1998), when looking at the history of consumption and gender, two figures preside over the nineteenth-century European landscape of female degeneracy—the prostitute and the kleptomaniac—both representing crimes committed by women. The prostitute, representing *woman-as-commodity*, presided over the fantasy of the most talented and distinguished European artists of the century. However, she was seen as the transmitter of disease and confusion and posed danger to the social and sexual order. The prostitute adorned her body with the increasing commodification of social and cultural relations in late nineteenth-century Europe. She was detached from the new public spaces of a progressively urban, consumer-oriented European society such as arcades, cafes, theatres and department stores. The kleptomaniac embodied *woman-as-consumer*. They were women who were compulsive stealers with shoplifting climbing in burgeoning department stores. They were bourgeois and aristocratic women, and mostly did not need to steal, but had a lack of control over their perverse yearning to consume allured by the enormous department stores. As cultural types, the kleptomaniac and the prostitute functioned as symbols of a particular set of nineteenth-century apprehension pertaining to the flourishing of consumerism, the commodification of modern life and its influence on social relations. These two types captured the dual associations women occupied in the nineteenth century to the new consumer culture; woman was signified as consumer and commodity.

This notion of a double, contesting relationship of women to consumer culture was first posited by Thorstein Veblen (1899) in his *Theory of the Leisure Class*. Veblen indicated that the early embodiment of property in ancient cultures was the possession of women by the strong and healthy men of the community as women were symbolised as trophies and the spoils of war requiring authorisation from the man. In a modern consumer society, their conditions in marriage still hold up a resemblance of their prior subjugation, as the wife turned out to be the ceremonial consumer of products the man produces. Thus, rather than pursuing her own interests or career, it is essential for the wife of an affluent man to engage in conspicuous consumption, which signifies his affluence and supremacy in the social hierarchy and displays her position as a property or asset. The feminine connoted as the consumer thus became consumed, commodified, and objectified to be used by men.

Studying the explosion of pornographic images of women in the 1820s, Solomon-Godeau (1996) historicised the image of woman-as-commodity and the connection it constructs between consumption and female-centred erotic desire:

This fantasy of uncontained female desire, usually imaged as a prostitute, became, the “most powerful icon” of modern mass consumer culture... The naturalized links between femininity, erotic coquetry, and the consumption of luxury goods contributed to women's exclusion from politics and their containment in the domestic household... That erotic investment retreated into a fantasy world only to resurface in pornography and in the form of neuroses like kleptomania... The prostitutes and other pornographic images can be described as commodities, because they represent a fetishized form of feminine. (Roberts, 1998, pp. 827-828).

de Grazia and Furlough (1996, p. 4) defined three phases to underscore the “myriad conflicts over power that constitute the politics of consumption”, specifically those manifested by gender roles. Likewise, Roberts (1998) illustrated women’s transforming relationship to consumption from the mid-eighteenth to the twentieth century, the socio-historical role of the woman manifested as head of the modern consumer household, and the matter of consumption and empowerment. “The liveliness, yet passivity, of women’s sense of sight and imagination” made them specifically exposed to the charm of appealing but frivolous commodities (de Grazia & Furlough, 1996, p. 36). The idea of nineteenth-century women, considered vulnerable to the allure of beautiful but frivolous commodities, translated into a contemporary representation of women in the consumer culture. Females are visualised in cultural representations as enjoying going shopping and thinking about consuming with fondness as shopping has become feminised. The ideal female consumer ‘goes shopping’ while the man works and she spends his money. Her frivolousness in buying and consuming is a major topic for anecdotes in the culture. She is such a ‘consumer’ that he has to always restrain her appetite for consumables.

Firat (1991) argued that while humans have always consumed, the notion of consumption as detached from production has its origin in the separation of the home from the workplace and the public from the private. In societies that later comprised contemporary Western civilisation, women were consumers in the domestic sphere, inhabiting the private domain and performing worthless and consumptive acts. In contrast, men were the producers in the workplace, political arena and public domain who warranted compensation because of their economic contribution.

Consumer culture is a reflection of the gender order and contributes to its creation. Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018, p. 194) argued that consumption “can reinforce privileged positions and heighten social injustice or conversely ameliorate inequality and empower marginal gender groups”, but often “these effects are ambivalent”. For instance, a gay club can generate a feeling of safety in LGBTQ + individuals, according them with ‘market citizenship’—the prerogative to be in the marketplace—and hence, can help them achieve ‘social acceptance’, while it can also contrarily intensify “ghettoization (i.e., spatial and social segregation)” leading to stigmatisation.

## Gender Studies in Marketing and Consumer Research

Gender remains a cornerstone in marketing narratives (Avery, 2012). Advertising, branding, positioning and segmentation are all highly affected by considerations about gender (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Throughout history, our consumer culture and consumption practices have always been shaped by gender because it is a ubiquitous filter that enables us to experience our social world (Avery, 2012; Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Kacen, 2000). In marketing, gender was first used as a psychological construct, and marketers used its binary facets to segregate consumers and measure their difference in responses. However, soon they began to create products based on those differences (Dobscha, 2019). “In marketing, a gender dichotomy lies at the heart of its theories and practices” (Stevens & Ostberg, 2011, p. 13), highlighting the need to adopt a post-structural feminist lens.

Society has historically moulded personality and behavioural traits into gendered dimensions and expressed gender through various personality attributes. Advertisement has typically depicted the female as caring, soft, subtle, seductive, vulnerable, submissive, careless, playful and other analogous characteristics in decorative, family-oriented or demure roles. In contrast, men have been portrayed as ambitious, authoritarian, confident, daring, energetic, strong, independent, professional, driven and in charge of social situations (Åkestam, 2017; Goffman, 1987; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Hatzithomas, Boutsouki & Ziamou, 2016). These stereotypical portrayals of males/females in consumer research and marketing communication are based on analogous dichotomies in our culture such as masculinity being associated with the mind, reason, culture and activity, whereas femininity is associated with the body, emotion, nature and passivity. (Hirschman, 1993; Stevens & Ostberg, 2011). As with these dualisms above, the politicised dimension of the social construction of masculinity/femininity portrays masculinity in a privileged position.

The Western middle class has progressed from the early days of rigid gender roles that characterised society. Hence, it is essential to look at how interactions of those gender roles have traversed in the post-feminist milieu (Ulver, 2015). Although literature in marketing and consumer research has taken time to acclimatise to the eruption of feminist perspectives, it has seen massive growth in the last two decades (Bettany et al., 2010; Gentry & Harrison, 2010). While women are increasingly portrayed in less stereotypically traditional roles, male depictions still evince an inordinately traditional masculine outlook (Bettany et al., 2010; Gentry & Harrison, 2010). Bettany et al. (2010) mapped out the genealogical development of gender works in marketing and consumer research. They demonstrated that early gender works in consumer research focused on consumer behaviour and accentuated gendered differences and gradually moved onto discussions about cultural constructions of masculinities and femininities.

Over the last two decades, we have witnessed exponential growth and development of research pertaining to gender in marketing and consumer research. According to Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018), three types of research on gender in the marketing and consumption domain exist: (1) Sex difference research: Early marketing and consumer research, with its roots in consumer behaviour and cognitive psychology, conflated gender with biological sex, lumping it with demographic and socio-economic variables, using ‘gender-as-a-variable’, measuring sex differences in consumer contexts; (2) Gendered experience coping research looks at people’s gendered experiences and often evaluates how consumers (or producers) cope with such experiences when they are, or have the potential, to be unpleasant, difficult, or demeaning in some way; (3) Market-level gender inequality research focuses on marketing practices that reproduce inequalities. However, Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018) claimed that in the 1990s, gender research in CCT took a turn towards a more sociologically and anthropologically informed orientation. CCT researchers (Coleman, 2012; Bettany et al., 2010; Zayer et al., 2012) today take a critical perspective and understand gender to be a complex, nuanced and fluid culturally based concept that accounts for the meaning a person attributes to one’s consumption.

Adopting gender perspectives relayed by Bristor and Fischer (1993), Hearn and Hein (2015) showcased how such traditions were included in marketing and consumer research. In line with their departure from Bristor and Fischer (1993), Hearn and Hein (2015, pp. 1629-1630) conceptualised gender research within the domain as: (1) “based on sex and gender as variable, a binary constructed difference (within assumed sameness) and/or role, connecting with liberal feminism and feminist empiricism”, (2) “gender as fundamental difference and structuring, connecting with women’s voice/experience feminism and standpoint feminism”, and (3) “culturalist approaches that draw on constructionist and discursive approaches, relating to poststructural and postmodernist feminisms”. Within these three streams of research, the post-structural orientation coincided most with research within the subfield of CCT and was used as a lens in this study. Hearn and Hein (2015) concluded that their framing using Bristor and Fischer (1993) opened up certain missing cases, such as (1) the use of queer theory that highlights the experiences of the LGBTQ+ community, (2) intersectional works of gender with critical race and black feminist as well as global, post-colonial and transnational feminisms, (3) material-discursive feminism, venturing beyond humans and (4) critical studies on men and masculinities, to which I would shift my gaze next.

## **Masculinities in Consumer Research**

Masculinity and femininity are “a bricolage of scattered meanings and shifting significances” (Kacen, 2000, p. 345). Thus, men not only form personal conceptualisations of masculinity but also do so within broader cultural ideologies,



with advertising serving as one of the primary forces to shape these ideologies (Otnes & Zayer, 2012). The sociology of gender is concerned with how society shapes and structures our understanding and perception of appropriate behaviour as men and women, in other words, masculinity and femininity (Zevallos, 2014). This prevailing gender order in society reflects the power structure and has a bearing on our identity and social practices.

In her famous treatise *Masculinities*, Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (2005) posited gender-order theory and delved deep into the social construction of masculinity. She argued that “gender is a way in which social practice is ordered” and proposed a trident model of gender structure, differentiating between relations of (1) power, (2) production and (3) cathexis (Connell, 2005). Masculinities are positions of men in the gender order. It is a process where gender relations and practices interact with our bodily experience, personality and culture. Connell (2005) posited the conceptualisation of multiple masculinities that vary across time, cultures and individuals. Multiple masculinities produce a static categorisation and are organised in relation to one another and to the whole composite gender order structure (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). She distinguished between a myriad of various embodiments of masculinities, such as hegemonic, subordinate, compliant and marginalised. While ‘hegemony’, ‘subordination’ and ‘complicity’ are internal artefacts of the social gender order, gender’s interactions with other societal structures such as class and race reproduce further relationships between masculinities (Connell, 2005). Holt and Thompson (2004) suggested that contemporary mass American consumer culture fetishises the man-of-action hero, appropriating it from the discourse of heroic masculinity. In this instance, gender is organised in symbolic practices (Connell, 2005). Furthermore, Connell (2005) also discussed the construction of masculinity and how they are shaped by our upbringing, lifestyle and indoctrination in our socio-cultural mores, in essence, our socialisation. These notions of masculinities, the social gender order and our gender socialisation are concepts used in the empirical analysis.

Inspired by Antonio Gramsci’s notion of hegemony, Connell coined the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ in her earlier works in 1982/3 (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The basic idea is that a dominant socially constructed form of masculinity exists and it is culturally elevated compared to other forms and expressions of masculinity, femininity and other forms of gender identities. It is defined as a practice that legitimises men’s dominant social role in society and justifies the subordination of women and other marginalised ways of being a man. Hegemonic masculinity is constructed by the cultural power accorded to the ideal male—Western, white, well-educated, heterosexual and physically well-built—through interactions between the cultural ideal and institutional power, mediated through different social institutions such as media and advertisements (Connell, 2005). Thompson and Holt (2004) identified this incessant pursuit of control and domination as ‘phallic masculinity’. This archetypical, normative nature is the

epitome that all other individuals with various gender identities must conform to and challenge. Hegemonic masculinity provides an understanding of the dominant patriarchal discourse that structures gender in most societies.

According to Connell (2005), cultural domination of hegemonic masculinity leads to the subordination of some forms of masculinity, as marginalisation is constituted in relation to the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant social group. She argued that such oppression relegates homosexual masculinities in the social order. Although not many men may be actively performing hegemonic masculinity, most men benefit from the hegemony, as they reap 'patriarchal dividend' from this institutional framework, by, for example, subordinating women (Connell, 2005). This cultural script is reflected in most marketplace representations. Although hegemonic masculinity is portrayed as an object of desire (Connell, 2005), Jones, Stanaland and Gelb (1998) identified that men did not react as expected to advertisements where well-built physical specimens of men were portrayed as sexy, flaunting their physical prowess. Hegemonic masculinity enables us to see how other forms of gender ideologies are subverted in society and the marketplace.

Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018) cogently outlined three research streams in consumer research pertaining to masculinities in CCT. The first research stream, 'gender identity projects and masculinity/ies', illustrates how men construct their masculine identities through their interpretation of brand and consumption practices, heavily influenced by their social class positions. Studying American men who experienced emasculation, disenfranchisement and the loss of their identity due to recent socio-historical changes such as the loss of their breadwinner role, Holt and Thompson (2004) demonstrated how these men attempted to recompense through consumption to perform the role of 'man-of-action hero', negotiated within conflicting myths of 'breadwinner' and 'rebel'. Furthermore, studying individuals with diverse cultural capital, Moisio, Arnould and Gentry (2013) illustrated how upper-class men with high cultural capital perceived Do-It-Yourself (DIY) work as therapeutic and intellectual, compared to working-class men with low cultural capital who viewed such works as an avenue to perform their masculinity. In a similar vein, conducting a three-year ethnographic study on Harley-Davidson motorcycle owners, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) illustrated how working-class bikers completely embodied the 'machismo' image that Harley-Davidson radiates, whereas the professional ones were more subtle in deploying more playful and emancipatory ways to showcase their 'weekend warrior' identity.

The second stream of research that Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018) discussed was 'the construction and performance of masculinity within specific consumption and/or life domains' that interrogated fashion consumption and discourses, specifically, how men negotiate new gender roles through consumption practices traditionally and culturally been coded as 'feminine'. Masculinity studies within this stream have focused on representations and advertising and explored the extension or inversion of the male gaze (Patterson & Elliott, 2002; Rinallo, 2006; Schroeder

& Zwick, 2004) that amplified men's sensitivities (Ostberg, 2012; Östberg, 2012; 2013) and other popular discourses (Elliott & Elliott, 2005; Ostberg, 2010). Patterson and Elliott (2002) highlighted the negotiated character of masculinity by illustrating exemplars from advertisements in lifestyle magazines that diametrically inverted the 'male gaze' upon their own bodies. They discussed how men, while consuming these advertisements, can espouse various subject positions and the possible implications this has on the negotiation of their identities. According to Patterson and Elliott (2002), hegemonic masculinity must acclimatise to the growing acceptance of feminism and egalitarianism movements in contemporary consumer culture, which engenders an upsurge in the feminisation of hegemonic masculinities. In another study, Elliott and Elliott (2005) investigated men's reactions to representations of male bodies in advertisements, specifically when they were depicted in a sexual or naked way and explored how they negotiated sexual meanings of advertisements in a social setting. Their findings showed six emergent themes: 'homophobia', 'gender stereotyping', 'disassociation with unattainable muscular body ideals', 'admiration of realistic male bodies' and 'the naked body as art'. An interesting observation was that men felt threatened to be represented in a feminine way and feared to be suspected of being homosexual.

Studies have also explored men's vulnerabilities and uncertainties within the context of consumption and fashion in terms of metrosexual (Tuncay, 2006; Tuncay & Otnes, 2008a; 2008b), übersexual (Rinallo, 2007) and retrosexual (Östberg, 2013) discourses. Scholars have examined the proliferation of metrosexual discourse that can incite androgynous consumption in various contexts (Holt & Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Similarly, Harrison (2008) indicated that metrosexual attitudes and practices have permeated the Western consumer culture and disrupted the traditional conception of masculinity. She argued that marketers are prompting men to become consumers of feminine products while concurrently preserving their identity of being masculine. Ulver (2015) investigated how the symbolic boundaries of social gender relationships are renegotiated when men venture into a historically feminine consumption domain and argued that male foodies are working towards elevating the domain's status in the long run, which in effect, is furthering the field's gender-neutral outlook. Analogously, Klasson and Ulver (2015) further explored how men configure their gender identity in a traditional feminised domain of domestic foodwork. They identified an assorted range of masculinities—resistance, instrumental and feminised masculinities—that ranges within a spectrum of traditional and hybrid masculinities. Belk and Costa (1998) studied how modern mountain men reanimate the myth of the annual Rocky Mountain Rendezvous from the past (1825-1840) to indulge in the fantasy of and experience the ephemeral consumption experiences that take them back to an alternative reality and embody an idealised rugged masculinity.

The final research stream that Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018) outlined is 'gender inequalities and the strategies that can be put in place to ameliorate them',

focusing on (1) the subversion of the normative underpinning of hegemonic masculinity impinging on what it means to be a man, (2) exploring the predicament of women/femininity, (3) those masculinities that are at risk, or (4) non-heterosexual orientations that challenge the hegemonic masculinity. Research in this stream has discussed men's emasculation, as they lose their taken-for-granted masculine privilege because more women move from home into work as well as into leadership positions in corporations and political offices, which can animate feminisation or gender inflexibility. Studies have also interrogated uncertainty and vulnerabilities as men venture into traditionally feminised domains. Kjeldgaard and Nielsen (2010) trenchantly observed female teenage consumption in Mexican telenovela *Rebelde* to understand the identity positions and tensions in the process of marketplace transition and how gender is negotiated by traversing across the glocalised cultural meanings of the dichotomous antithesis of tradition and modernity and conformity and non-conformity (Kjeldgaard & Nielsen, 2010). The current study is an attempt to understand how migrant consumers navigate gender ideologies, which are informed by these masculinity discourses.

## **Problems in Gender Consumer Research Literature**

Dobscha and Ostberg (2021) posited that despite the growth in gender scholarship in marketing and consumer research, studies of gender issues within this domain—particularly those that align with a feminist perspective—remain marginal in mainstream academic conversations, in comparison with other disciplines that embrace a more nuanced, culture-historically-embedded, socio-politically-charged perspective that represents the function gender performs in today's societies. Specifically, Hearn and Hein (2015) indicated that such ways of framing gender in existing literature have spearheaded copious cases of 'missing feminisms'—such as queer theory, critical race, intersectional and transnational feminisms, material-discursive feminism and critical studies on men and masculinities—that have been neglected within the body of research. Likewise, Maclaran (2015) and Fischer (2015) reiterated the importance of studying gender issues traversing other social issues, which is pivotal to emphasising the complex and multifaceted nature of gender inequalities. The current study explored the connection of gender with the sensitive social category of migrants to shed light on the propagation of cultural stereotypes and the construction of discursive inequalities.

Consumers, marketers and various institutional forces construct gender, which can, on the one hand, amplify privileged positions in society and exacerbate social injustice and on the other hand, mitigate inequality and empower marginal gender groups (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). As explored throughout this section, equality and social justice issues underpin gender research (Bettany et al., 2010). Previous research on gender in consumer research has demonstrated that socially marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as immigrants—particularly women or

other alternative gender identities or the LGBTQ+ community—can be stigmatised and disenfranchised, but can also wield collective power through movements (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Fischer (2015) contended that scarce attention has been paid to ‘market-level gender inequality research’ and called for more studies focusing on understanding how marketplace practices and perceptions benefit men and women differently, accordingly reinforcing the hegemonic gender inequalities. This study can, thus, highlight how gender influences migrant consumers’ everyday lives and discourses in their newly embedded foreign host context. The importance of understanding the reproduction of gender inequalities in transcultural contexts has also been well established within calls for gender research in marketing and consumer research (Hearn & Hein, 2015). Because consumers’ experiences are highly varied depending on subject positions and contexts (Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021), studying South Asian migrant consumers can also expand our understanding of non-Western perspectives.

## Ideologies

Ideology is a much-contested concept in academic works, as its conceptualisation is diverse in social sciences in general, as well as in marketing and consumer research (Coffin & Egan-Wyer, 2022; Crockett & Wallendorf, 2004). Eagleton (1991, pp. 1-2, 28-30) underlined this complexity of meanings by pointing out sixteen distinctive interconnected definitions of ‘ideology’ and subsequently presenting six different meanings of ideologies: (1) “the general material process of production of ideas, beliefs and values in social life”; (2) “ideas and beliefs (whether true or false) which symbolize the conditions and life-experiences of a specific, socially significant group or class”; (3) “the promotion and legitimation of the interests of such social groups in the face of opposing interest” (4) “confine it to the activities of a dominant social power”; (5) “ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class specifically by distortion and dissimulation”, and (6) “such [false and deceptive] beliefs as arising not from the interests of a dominant class but from the material structure of the society as a whole”. Social scientists have long explored how ideology is entrenched in and explicable from cultural texts (see Barthes, 1983; Geertz, 1973). According to Earley (2014), the study of ideology in academic studies can be dated back to *The German Ideology* (Marx & Engels, [1846] 1970) that served as an underpinning for critical theory postulated by scholars from the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer & Adorno, [1944] 2002) to Althusser (1971), Habermas ([1962] 2015) and Žižek (1994; 2008). However, recapitulating all these scholarly views is beyond the scope of this book.

This section provides a necessary understanding of the concept of ideology used in this study. The section starts with how ideology has been defined within various literature, and specifically, within consumer research, and highlights how this

concept has been used to investigate consumption. The next two subsections delve into discourses and their connections to ideologies. Introducing the notion of discourse, I demonstrated how studying consumer discourses is critical to understanding migrant consumers' underlying ideologies. The penultimate subsection provides a review of existing literature pertaining to the navigation of contesting ideological tensions in the marketplace, which this research explores. The section ends with a summary of problems within ideologies literature in CCT.

## **Ideologies in Consumer Research**

Consumer researchers across the board have been highly captivated by the role of ideologies in understanding consumer and consumption narratives. According to Arnould and Thompson (2007), the study of ideologies is one of the four fundamental tenets of consumer culture theory. Scholars in consumer research have investigated ideologies of consumption (Douglas & Isherwood, 1979; Hirschman, 1988; McCracken, 1985). CCT researchers have long been interested in mass-mediated ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Scholars within this stream of research have attempted to understand how consumers animate agency and pursue their identity projects through their consumption practices and experiences within the cultural framework manifested by 'dominant commercial ideologies' (Arnould et al., 2019). Consumer culture theorists have investigated the role of political (Crockett & Wallendorf, 2004; Pineda, Sanz-Marcos & Gordillo-Rodríguez, 2020; Varman & Belk, 2009; Zhao & Belk, 2008) and religious (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; O'Guinn & Belk, 1989; Sandıkcı & Ger, 2010) ideologies in structuring consumption, specifically, how these ideologies negotiate with institutional forces such as myths (Fitchett, Patsiaouras & Davies, 2014; Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Thompson, 2004), ethnicity (Crockett, 2017; Veresiu & Giesler, 2018; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) and gender (Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Gentry & Harrison, 2010; Hirschman, 1993; Knudsen & Kuever, 2015; Ostberg, 2010; Sredl, 2018; Thompson, 1996). The latter is particularly relevant for this study.

Within the consumer acculturation literature, scholars have discussed the notion of ideology in various degrees to study the acculturation of migrant consumers (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Peñaloza, 1994; Touzani, Hirschman & Smaoui, 2016; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), multiculturalism (Demangeot, Broderick & Craig, 2015; Olivotti, 2016; Sobh, Belk & Wilson, 2013; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999; Veresiu & Giesler, 2018), race and ethnicity (Bristor, Lee & Hunt, 1995; Burton, 2009; Crockett, 2017; Crockett & Wallendorf, 2004; Veresiu, Visconti & Giesler, 2011) and consumer identities (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2018; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Weinberger & Crockett, 2018). Additionally, some studies highly relevant to the present research (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019) have

explored contesting gender ideologies in the (Swedish) marketplace. However, the navigation of migrant consumers' contesting gender ideologies remains unexplored.

According to Hirschman (1993) and Crockett and Wallendorf (2004), in consumer research, ideology follows Hegelian-Marxist delineation as a system of beliefs and values stemming from and propagating the worldview of the society's hegemony to consolidate and legitimate the dominant group's power and control over the social institutions. Within CCT, Arnould et al. (2019, p.110) defined ideology as "values, norms, beliefs, meanings, symbols, and customs, that is, action-oriented sets of beliefs that offers [sic] a position for the subject, as part of a worldview". While, there are many uses of ideology, as specified above, CCT researchers have used ideology in two senses and meanings: (1) in an apolitical sense, where it refers to the belief structures of any groups within the society and (2) in a political sense, where it refers to the knowledge and power of the dominant group in the society (Earley, 2014). The notion of the dominant ideology is related to false consciousness or illusions. It is found in Marxist works, originating from the work of Friedrich Engels, and denotes a fabricated perception of reality constructed by the dominant group (Hirschman, 1993). Although this has been the most commonly held view on ideologies, recent studies within CCT have used a Žižekian psychoanalytical lens—which also departs from Marx by critiquing the capitalist system but reconceptualised the idea of deceiving unconscious subjects—to study ideologies as an invisible influence that manifests a fantasy as support for reality (Carrington, Zwick & Neville, 2016; Coffin & Egan-Wyer, 2022; Ulver, 2021). However, my view on ideology in this study corresponds with Molander, Östberg and Kleppe (2019, p. 121-2):

When we talk about ideology here, we follow Eagleton (1991) in referring to the different ways in which a worldview, value, or belief system of a group of people is continuously created and recreated through various types of reproduction strategies.

In all definitions of ideologies, they are framed as some form of fundamental or axiomatic ideas or belief systems socially shared by members of a community within a society. Thus, ideologies are not personal beliefs of individuals but are socially held. They are certain modes of representing and constructing a society that reproduces distributed power relations (Gyawali, 2020; van Dijk, 1993). In line with the use of ideology within CCT and taking my departure from Eagleton (1991)—as explicated above by Molander, Östberg and Kleppe (2019)—in this study ideologies are viewed as *systems of ideas and beliefs that inform us how society is organised, define what are appropriate norms and structure thoughts and behaviour, all of which have political consequences.*

## **Delineating Discourse**

Discourse represents socially constructed knowledge of reality that structures how we think and act, and in effect, shape how we understand the world (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; Rose, 2016). They are a group of statements that construct objects, buttress institutions, reproduce power relations and have an ideological impact (Elliott, 1996; Rose, 2016). Discourse primarily refers to language in the form of “spoken dialogue” or “written text”, and it highlights the “interactions between writers and readers”, speakers and addressee, as well as “situational context of language use” and the “notion of genre” (Fairclough, 1993, p. 3). Discourses are, thus, units and forms of speech and interaction, that are structured by institutions and constitute our everyday behaviour (Wodak, 1997). In this study, I took a post-structuralist gender perspective to study ideologies, both necessitating an understanding of discourses.

The idea of discourse is based on Foucauldian understanding. Two concepts are central to the notion of discourse – language and power. Discourses are articulated through diverse forms of texts and languages and visual and verbal images, which people use to construct their reality (Rose, 2016). Hence, intertextuality is important for discourses as it denotes that the meaning of an image or text is dependent on the meanings of other images and texts (Rose, 2016). Similar to performativity, this method draws from the speech act theory “for an emphasis on the social action aspects of language” and ethnomethodology “for a focus on how people use language in everyday situations” to construct and make sense of their social world (Elliott, 1996). Similarly, a discursive formation is the “the system of dispersion”, in other words, the way meanings are linked in conjunction between parts of a discourse within a discourse (Foucault, 1972; Rose, 2016). Second, power is the bedrock of Foucault’s (1972) theoretical premises. He believed that power is not merely something that the society’s hegemony imposes upon the downtrodden bottom-of-the-chain; power is omnipresent, such as discourses, and it breeds resistance (Rose, 2016). According to Foucault, subjects are produced through discourses, as discourses shape our way of thinking and acting (Rose, 2016). In Foucault’s work, knowledge, power and truth are inextricably entwined. He asserted that power produces knowledge, which is discursive and all discourses are imbedded in power, which depends on the verisimilitude of their knowledge (Rose, 2016). According to Callon (2007), a discourse is performative when it buttresses the foundations and constructions of the reality it represents, despite being outside that reality. Callon’s notion of the performative seamlessly connects with Foucault’s idea of discourse (Lash, 2015). However, to me, the concepts of performativity and discourse are connected because both are signified by language and text and draw from the speech act theory.

Judith Butler’s work on gender performativity has been instrumental in feminist studies of discourses. Analysing the relationship between language and gender,



Marlis Hellinger propounded that “female and male linguistic behavior” is related to “the designations of women and men at the centre of its considerations” and interprets “persons-related asymmetries in the field of language systems and language use as expressions of the linguistic discrimination of women (sexism) and links these directly to the plane of social discrimination” bounded by “the principle of the linguistic equal treatment of women and men” (Wodak, 1997, p. 8). Language is constituted as a symbolic representation and legitimisation of patriarchal structures, subsuming and treating women within androcentric categories (Wodak, 1997, p. 8). Hence, in this study, I adopted a post-structuralist feminist and discursive viewpoint to understand the non-sexist use of language.

### **Dovetailing Discourses and Ideologies**

Gerring (1997) indicated that ideologies are located in thoughts, behaviours and languages, or in other words, in discourses. Ideologies are “foundational beliefs that underlie the shared social representations of specific kinds of social groups” and “these representations are in turn the basis of discourse and other social practices” (van Dijk, 2006, pp. 120-121). Ideologies are articulated and reproduced in the social practices of consumers and developed, enacted, transformed and propagated through discourse (van Dijk, 1995; 2006). Ideologies are cognitive as well as social because they “essentially function as the interface between the cognitive representations and processes underlying discourse and action, on the one hand, and the societal position and interests of social groups, on the other hand” (van Dijk, 1995, p. 18). Gyawali (2020, pp. 2-3) argued that “ideologies are the principles that essentially function as the cognitive representations in the form of discourse, societal position, and interests of social groups which connect macrolevel analyses of social structure with microlevel studies of individual interaction”. Thus, the “conception of ideology also allows us to establish the crucial link between macrolevel analyses of groups, social formations and social structure, and microlevel studies of situated, individual interaction and discourse” (van Dijk, 1995, p. 18). In the following excerpt, van Dijk (1995, pp. 19-21) highlighted how macro-level ideologies can be understood through individual micro-level individual interactions through discourses:

This combined presence of personal and (instantiated, particularized, applied) social information in mental models<sup>10</sup> allows us not only to explain the well-known missing

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<sup>10</sup> According to van Dijk (1995, p. 19), models are personal mental representations of social practices, events, actions or situations people are involved in or have read about, which characterises “the beliefs (knowledge and opinions) people have about their everyday lives and defines what we usually call people’s experiences”. Furthermore, he argued that these models are unique and personal and managed by the social actor’s experiences, as well as influenced by the general social cognitions that these individuals share with others in their group.

link between the individual and the social, between the micro and the macro analysis of society, but also to make explicit the relations between general group ideologies and actual text and talk. That is, models control how people act, speak or write, or how they understand the social practices of others. In other words, ideologies are localized between societal structures and the structures of the minds of social members. They allow social actors to translate their social properties (identity, goal, position, etc.) into the knowledge and beliefs that make up the concrete models of their everyday life experiences, that is, the mental representations of their actions and discourse. Indirectly (viz., through attitudes and knowledge), therefore, ideologies control how people plan and understand their social practices, and hence also the structures of text and talk.

Ideologies always interact in various ways and interaction is fundamental to discourse (Gyawali, 2020; Hodge, 2012; van Dijk, 1995). Socio-cultural institutions structure ideological interaction grounded on the language connected with power relations, and thus, interactional discourse is pivotal in perpetuating ideologies (Gyawali, 2020). Ideologies are, therefore, the shared beliefs among groups defined by the negotiation of meanings and social interactions between individuals in a particular socio-cultural context, interpenetrating each other (Gyawali, 2020; Fairclough, 2013). Discourses represent the totality of interactions in a certain domain (Wodak, 1997). Based on the socio-cultural perspective and works of various scholars on ideologies and discourse (Fairclough, 1985; Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak, 2011; Hodge, 2012; van Dijk, 1993; Weiss & Wodak, 2007), Gyawali (2020, p. 4) posited ideological interaction theory that highlights “the interaction process where society and language interact to the individual and cultural awareness and that have the effects of critical discourse approaches from the baseline, and with this reference, an individual perceives a perspective of a discourse”. Thus, various levels of discourses interact with ideologies and engender another form of ideology (Gyawali, 2020). Ideologies are progressively acquired and deep-rooted but can be changed over time gradually and copious experiences and discourses are required to change ideologies (Molander, 2021; van Dijk, 2006). Ideologies are gradually acquired through long-term processes of socialisation. Drawing on this line of thought, it can be argued that various (four) contesting gender discourses interact and intermesh to produce modes of ideological navigation, or what I later refer to as *gender transculturation*.

## Gender Ideology

According to Philips (2001, p. 6016), “gender ideology is concerned with normative beliefs about the proper roles for and fundamental natures of women and men in human societies”. Duerst-Lahti (2008, p. 182) defined gender ideologies as “structured beliefs and ideas about ways power should be arranged according to social constructs associated with sexed bodies”. In this study, I employed the

concept of *gender ideology* instead of using the term *gender*. This is because “in taking up gender ideology rather than collapsing gender’s ideological aspects into the single term of gender (or feminism), it is possible to recognize ways usual treatments of political ideology have rendered gender nonpolitical and invisible” (Duerst-Lahti, 2008, p. 160). Moreover, Duerst-Lahti (2008, pp. 159-162) indicated that “gender itself has ideological dimensions through ideas about biological sex and the ways power should be distributed” and “the centrality of ideas and belief systems to both gender and politics inevitably involves ideology”, and thus, gender ideology is a form of—and hence should be conceptualised as such—a political ideology. She further posited that, as a political ideology, gender ideology involves three conceptual dimensions: (1) adjudication about human nature, (2) how power should be distributed through various institutional actors based on those judgements and (3) how that power redistribution can be inflected to shape human behaviour. Duerst-Lahti (2008, pp. 162, 167) highlighted that discourses underpin gender ideology, which

has been considered to be only ideational, what political actors do, and discourse or a set of linguistic symbols...as behavior requires discourse to be comprehended, and ideas usually underpin behavior and arguably are inextricably linked to studying discourse. Certainly gender ideology has been considered to be all of these by various authors. ...discourse matters greatly precisely because it constructs gender “reality,” and the reifications that become what we know about government and politics, including gender politics. For gender ideology, many would argue that discourse cannot be separated from ideology—the signs, signifiers, and words—that bring meaning to ideas and enable conceptualization and action.

Since the second wave of feminism, gender ideology has been framed as either patriarchy or feminism in contemporary Western societies (cf. Barrett, 1980; Coward, 1983; Lerner, 1986; Walby, 1990). Duerst-Lahti (2008, pp. 159, 167) argued that “gender ideology, is most commonly understood as manifesting along a continuum”, on a scale “from traditional to egalitarian”. This is also reflected in consumer acculturation literature (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Four different forms of gender ideologies—traditional patriarchal, egalitarian, transgressive and Islamic—are discussed in the final section of this chapter. Patriarchal traditional ideology has been in place for thousands of years and still dominates the social gender order in most societies, including Sweden and more predominantly Bangladesh. In Sweden, gender-egalitarian ideology is induced by the welfare feminist state, making the country one of the most gender equal in the world (Ulver, 2019b). Finally, whereas Sweden is secular, religious ideologies heavily influence everyday life and discourses of gender in Muslim-dominated Bangladesh, and thus, informants in this study also potentially navigate Islamic gender ideology.

So far, in this sub-section, I explained that my use of ‘gender ideology’ in this study refers to generic systems of ideas and beliefs in relation to gender (cf. Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). However, as described in the introduction chapter, there is another use of the term ‘the gender ideology’, which is a pejorative and conservative critique against the proliferation of gender theory, equality and transgression (Butler, 2019; 2021; Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021). This is briefly mentioned below to highlight what I do *not* refer to as gender ideology in this study. Kuhar and Paternotte (2017, p.5) explicated that this denigrating notion of ‘the gender ideology’ was constructed to:

oppose women’s and LGBT rights activism as well as the scholarship deconstructing essentialist and naturalistic assumptions about gender and sexuality...[regarding] gender as the ideological matrix of a set of abhorred ethical and social reforms, namely sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage and adoption, new reproductive technologies, sex education, gender mainstreaming, protection against gender violence and others.

Kováts (2018, p. 528) characterised this contemporary anti-gender counter-movement as a conservative backlash against gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights:

Since 2012, several European countries (among others Austria, Croatia, France, Germany, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia or Slovakia) have seen the rise of conservative and, in part, fundamentalist social movements against the perceived threat of what they call (depending on the context) ‘gender ideology’, ‘gender theory’, or ‘genderism’. The movements mobilizing against ‘gender ideology’ are frequently understood as a conservative backlash against achieved levels of equality between women and men and/or LGBTQ rights. This perspective of ‘the patriarchy/heteronormativity fighting back’ seems as tempting as it is simplifying.

Furthermore, Mouffe (2005) indicated that this political conflict stems from the lack of consensus among people in society, which is a prerequisite for a well-oiled democracy. This visibly growing counter-movements from consumers with far-right ideologies, such as anti-feminist and anti-gay sentiments (Ulver & Laurell, 2020), in the socio-cultural sphere adversely impacts the acceptance of gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies.

## **Navigating Contesting Ideological Tensions**

Exploring Swedish fatherhood ideals at the nexus of the Swedish state, commercial actors and consumers’ identity projects, Molander, Östberg and Kleppe (2019) highlighted that state policies shape not only the livelihood of individuals and families through child rearing and women’s participation in the workforce, but also consumption of market offerings as male consumers connect to these fatherhood ideals. The authors underlined that Sweden is ripe with instances of how a distinct

state ideology of egalitarianism has induced consumer culture to evolve at the confluence of the state, consumers' lived experiences and firms' marketing pursuits. They produced a genealogical account of three touchpoints by tracing Sweden's distinct gender ideology throughout history: the distant breadwinner in 1932, the caring father in 1974 and the everyday father in 2015. They argued that marketing communication in Sweden has strived to reduce men's insecurities portraying them as more gender-neutral as they enter feminine consumption spaces or revamp feminine activities as gender-neutral. While the study by Molander, Östberg and Kleppe (2019) explored the function of the state as an ideology-producing function, it only investigated fatherhood ideals and is delimited by exploring only consumers who are fathers.

Molander, Östberg and Kleppe (2019) posited that the state is usually in the backdrop as policy-makers, whereas its influence as an 'ideology-producing' function in shaping the consumer culture and reproducing gender imbalances is under-theorised, particularly in consumer research. The authors went on to point to limited previous studies in fields outside of consumer research (Hobson & Morgan, 2002; Gregory & Milner, 2011), where state policies have a bearing on fatherhood on an ideological level. Because "the Swedish context enables theorising of the State as an involved actor with the legitimacy to influence individual citizens' lives and consumption choices" (Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019, p. 122), the marketplace was perpetuated with contesting gender ideologies.

The same authors conducted another study, investigating the case of 'Swedish Dads' through critical visual analysis (Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019). Their findings indicated "how visual expressions of culture" can construct "new discursive territory fostering new types of consumer cultural negotiations on fatherhood ideals" (Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019, p. 430). The authors illustrated how conflicting gender ideologies are played out in the marketplace. The 'hero shots'—a series of photographs by Bävman that embodies a shift in portrayals of fatherhood in terms of masculinity—presented an involved fatherhood ideal, where the fathers were portrayed as prioritising the needs of their children within the boundaries of their homes, vis-à-vis the representations of contemporary Western gendered fatherhood found in media, pop culture and advertising. They demonstrated how the Swedish state disseminated its distinct state ideologies through this artistic communication.

In a similar vein, Molander (2021) showcased how Swedish single fathers negotiate agency as they navigate conflicting ideological tensions between a progressive state ideology of 'dual emancipation' and a contemporary patriarchal marketplace ideology of 'intense mothering'. Similar to the two studies above, Molander (2021) also explored Swedish fathers navigating the contesting terrains of state and marketplace ideological conflicts and demonstrated how state ideologies have the impetus to counteract age-old traditional ideologies in the marketplace, pertaining to gender. While she illustrated the significance of the (Swedish) state as an ideology reproducing function and how it can play out in everyday lives of consumers, she

also demonstrated how state ideologies have the potential to alter deeply entrenched conventional gender ideologies, which is relevant in the analysis of this study.

The collision of diverse ideologies creates tensions in the marketplace (Üstüner & Holt, 2007; Peñaloza, 1994; Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005). Üstüner and Holt (2007) studied poor migrant women residing in a Turkish squatter to understand how their taken-for-granted worldview of rural ideologies conflicts with the hegemonic Turkish consumer culture. While Üstüner and Holt (2007) worked on consumer acculturation, they noted that conflicting ideologies are negotiated by consumers in their identity construction. Nevertheless, this study could take this even further and explore how gender is animated and contested through multifarious ideological tensions. Press et al. (2014) also interrogated how culturally-embedded ideological tensions influence the legitimacy of strategic orientations of businesses and their strategic decision-making in the context of commodity agriculture.

Veresiu and Giesler (2018) showcased how conflicts are negotiated and reproduced in an inclusive marketplace that celebrates cultural differences through exoticisation and commodification. Interestingly, they identified ideological tensions that permeate a society built on ‘hallowed grounds’ of neo-liberal ideology. However, concurrently, their analysis is also delimited by this very neo-liberal ideology of multiculturalism. Although Canada was an ideal setting to investigate consumer acculturation, it would be more intriguing to observe ideological negotiations in consumer cultures subscribing to templates different from neo-liberalism. Furthermore, Veresiu and Giesler (2018) were also concerned with a production-to-consumption cycle, which might have prevented them from exploring a broader gamut of ideological forces, such as religion. To ameliorate such imbalances, it is important to carve out how various ideological forces structure gender in consumer cultures.

## **Problems in CCT Scholarship on Ideologies**

As highlighted in this section, previous research on conflicting ideologies in the marketplace has rarely focused on understanding contesting gender ideologies of migrant consumers. Only a handful of studies (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019) have explored the navigation of contesting gender ideologies in the marketplace. Additionally, studies on consumer acculturation (to which I shift my gaze next) have primarily discussed how migrant consumers draw from home and host cultural discursive resources to shape their hybrid identities (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) further posited that transcultural influences also impact migrant consumers’ identity outcomes. Although these studies have mentioned ideologies—interpreted based on the theoretical lens of this study—they have focused on the construction of identities and hence have not explored their higher-

order ideologies of gender in the marketplace. Thus, ideologies remain not fully explored within consumer acculturation studies, negligence that would be remedied through this research. Moreover, consumer acculturation studies have also rarely focused on understanding gender ideologies (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). As explicated previously, it is essential to understand the sensitive interaction of immigrants and gender ideologies and particularly to explore gender inequality, marginalisation and vulnerability among immigrants in the Global North. The potentially sensitive discursive interaction that shape migrant consumers' acculturation is the core motif of this study.

## Consumer Acculturation

Acculturation is “what happens when peoples socialized in one (minority) culture migrate and so come into continuous first-hand contact with a new (dominant) culture” (Üstüner & Holt, 2007, p. 41). Acculturation scholars have argued that when migrants engage in national, social or cultural ‘border crossings’, they instigate a socialisation process of adaptation into their new environment’s socio-economic and -cultural conditions and learning of new behaviour, attitudes and values of the host culture, which often induces psychological stress (Luedicke, 2011; Yoo & Lee, 2015). Consumer acculturation is defined as “the general process of movement and adaptation to the consumer cultural environment in one country by persons from another country” (Peñaloza, 1994, p. 33). According to Peñaloza and Gilly (1999), it includes a combination of intercultural interactions and adaptations such as the assimilation of a new culture, conservation of the original culture and resistance to both cultures.

“Consumer acculturation theorists have developed an insightful body of literature about the ways in which migrants adapt to foreign cultures via consumption” (Luedicke, 2011, p. 223). Jafari and Visconti (2015) postulated that consumer research on race/ethnicity can be subsumed into three trajectories: (1) acculturation studies interrogating how border crossing impacts consumers'/marketers' relationships with the marketplace, ideologies and socio-cultural institutions, (2) consumer ethnocentrism studies investigating how race/ethnicity impacts consumer and organisation preferences for market offerings in cross-cultural contexts and (3) ethnic marketing studies looking into marketing related to certain consumer segments based on their ethnic attributes. This study is positioned within the first trajectory.

This study takes its primary departure from the consumer acculturation literature stream in consumer research. The review of consumer acculturation literature is divided into six parts, starting with early assimilationist acculturation studies, followed by post-assimilationist consumer acculturation research and subsequent

inclusion of macro forces such as ideologies in consumer acculturation research. The next part reviews acculturation literature in terms of the marketplace. In the next sub-section, a review of consumer acculturation literature studying gender and ideologies is presented. Such a nexus of these streams of literature is where the current study is positioned and primarily contributes and is highly relevant to understand how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies to make sense of their acculturation experience. Conceptual grounding of how consumer acculturation has developed over time is pivotal to understanding how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies. The section ends with a brief review of potential problems within the consumer acculturation literature.

## Early Acculturation Research

Acculturation is concerned with “what happens to individuals, who have developed in one cultural context, when they attempt to re-establish their lives in another one” (Berry, 1997, p. 5). Outside the domain of consumer research, Berry (2019; 1997; 1980) has extensively discussed four alternative acculturation strategies that migrants can experience: (1) *assimilation*, when individuals look forward to the interaction with the new culture rather than preserving their cultural identity, (2) *separation*, when immigrants seek to hold onto their home culture and evade interaction with the host culture, (3) *integration*, when migrants attempt to fuse their original culture with interactions in the new culture and (4) *marginalisation*, when individuals do not want to maintain their original culture but they are also not involved in the new one due to disenfranchisement, which results in exclusion. Berry’s work has inspired generations of scholars to explore the acculturation of migrant consumers.

Early consumer acculturation research (1981-1988) focused on (1) consumption patterns of ethnic/racial minorities, (2) whereas subsequently, conversations (1989-2006) moved to migrant consumers’ experiences of adaptations into new markets/cultures and (3) now (2007-present) to the role of macro-institutional forces (de)construction of ethnicity/race (Luedicke, 2011; Visconti et al., 2014; Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005). In consumer research, the works of Wallendorf and Reilly (1983), Saegert, Hoover and Hilger (1985) and Deshpande, Hoyer and Donthu (1986)—who looked into the assimilation of Hispanics and Anglo-Americans in the U.S. through their consumption practices—initiated a stream of work on consumer acculturation. While Wallendorf and Reilly (1983) demonstrated that consumption patterns of Mexican immigrants in the U.S.—unlike traditional assimilation models—is not a straightforward fusion of two cultures but rather a novel and unique cultural style, Mehta and Belk (1991) showcased the antithesis, as they depicted Indians living in India and the U.S., adopting American culture as well as Indian culture with hyper-identifying artefacts. These early works investigated the influence of ethnic identification with the new culture on consumption patterns.



However, succeeding acculturation research (Peñaloza, 1989; 1994; 1995; Oswald, 1999; Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005) has taken a post-assimilationist view that challenged these one-dimensional models of gradual assimilation.

## **The Second Wave: Post-assimilationist View**

The post-assimilationist view espouses that immigrants' identity projects and acculturation outcomes are contingent on their economic and socio-cultural capital and structures (Luedicke, 2011). In her boundary-defining work that marked the second wave of consumer acculturation studies, Peñaloza (1994) first challenged the assimilationist models of acculturation and focused on the influence of the marketplace as an acculturation agent on consumer acculturation. Studying Mexican American immigrants, she highlighted how migrant consumers ascribe meanings and symbols to objects in diverse situations and cultural contexts, disregarding the direct ethnic connection between the consumer and the brand. Separating consumer acculturation from consumer socialisation, she indicated acculturation as the process and cultural base of consumer behaviour and learning processes as they are informed by the interactions between multiple cultures and exhibit culturally defined consumption skills. Socio-cultural institutions from both cultures act as acculturation agents in helping immigrant consumers reproduce Mexican and Anglo-American cultural norms in their new host context. Influenced by but also diverging from Berry (2019; 1997; 1980), she postulated four acculturation practices—assimilation, resistance, maintenance and physical segregation—and argued that immigrant consumers blend these practices to shape their identities. Peñaloza (1994) indicated how migrant consumers blended functional assimilation and cultural rejection in their consumption practices as they engaged in acts of resistance to Anglo and Mexican marketers.

Bouchet (1995)—borrowing Claude Lévi-Strauss' notion of 'bricolage'—referred to consumer identities as a bricolage to denote the multiplicity and entwinedness of cultural ties and traits. He called consumers 'bricoleurs' because they stitch their identities without a map to navigate. Drawing on Bouchet's (1995) notion of marketable ethnicity, Oswald (1999) investigated Haitian immigrants in the U.S. from a post-modern perspective and looked into the performative aspect of consumer acculturation as they negotiate cultural differences and conflicts through consumption by 'culture swapping' or switching between their Haitian elite and American middle-class tastes based on the situation, instead of embracing a fixed identity position. Oswald (1999) illustrated creolized consumption patterns as overlapping identity construction with distinct ethnic group association via contesting cultural categories: mainstream Americans, francophone Haitian, Haitian Creole and African Americans. She demonstrated how migrant consumers use the marketplace as a resource to construct their identities, escaping social structures of ethnicity/race and gender. Peñaloza (1994) and Oswald (1999) demonstrated how

consumer acculturation rarely results in a complete assimilation into the new host culture, forgoing the older one. Furthermore, they also ignored the influences of other cultures as a result of global consumer culture influencing the two cultures.

Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) redefined post-assimilationist ethnic consumer research by repudiating the notion of culture swapping and the four strategies as posited and popularised by Berry (2019; 1997; 1980) and instead focused on the reflexive nature of immigrant consumers' identities. By looking into Greenlandic immigrants in Denmark, a non-North American context, they postulated a more fluid orientation of identity positions, as consumers construct 'hybrid identities' in a continuum. The authors also presented the notion of hyperculture as migrant consumers consume commodified Greenlandic offerings in Denmark to become more Greenlandic than Greenlandic. They argued that consumers oscillate between the positions of hyperculture, assimilation, integration and pendulism. Drawing from these minority and dominant discourses, immigrant consumers structure their hybrid identities.

Exploring Iranian immigrants in the U.K., Jafari and Goulding (2008) introduced the idea of a 'torn self' that stems from the negotiation of conflicting ideologies from Islamism in Iran and Western neo-liberal ideology. The contestation emerged, on the one hand, from their home culture's Iranian Islamic ideologies constraining individuality, and on the other hand, from their host culture, which is a more Western market-based ideology of emancipation and individuality and governed by neo-liberalism. Nevertheless, their focus was on identity projects and the authors did not explore such negotiations in relation to gender. In a similar acculturation context (the UK), Lindridge (2010) investigated Hindu, Muslim and Sikh women immigrants who navigated across their home cultural Indian values, host cultural Western neo-liberal ideologies and religious identity. The study underlined the importance of understanding the complex entwinement of acculturation with religion, specifically how religious identity shaped their consumption. However, he also implied certain gender differences in their findings. Dion, Sitz and Rémy (2011) studied regionalism in France and extended the post-assimilationist acculturation model by adding an embodied dimension.

These post-assimilationist studies have focused on how migrant consumers' interactions with the dominant culture enable them to creatively craft a diverse range of fluid and integrated identities through marketplace resources, as their minority culture is commodified and marketed to the dominant culture (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). This study takes a theoretical departure from post-assimilationist consumer acculturation theory.

## Current Studies Exploring Macro-Institutional Forces

According to Visconti et al. (2014), the third wave of acculturation studies is ongoing, moving away from subjective/personal identity projects to interrogating the role of macro-institutional forces in the (de)construction of race/ethnicity (Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Üstüner & Holt, 2007; Veresiu & Giesler, 2018). Reviewing previous acculturation models, Luedicke (2011) critiqued existing one-dimensional models, which only focus on consumers' acquiring of skills and knowledge, and proposed a recursive model of consumer cultural acculturation that instead accents socio-cultural discourses and practices of consumer adaptation among various actors within a large socio-cultural structure. Although the end outcome of this focus remains the identity construction of migrant consumers, Luedicke (2011) demonstrated the importance of considering socio-cultural discourses and studying ideologies as highly relevant to unpack such discourses. Brunk, Visconti and Veresiu (2013) argued how prior research in consumer acculturation has primarily focused on micro-processes of individual migrants' acculturation. Although the recent wave of studies in consumer acculturation has started exploring meso and macro perspectives (Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Üstüner & Holt, 2007; Üstüner & Thompson, 2012), Visconti et al. (2014) called attention to a dearth of studies enquiring multiple macro perspectives concurrently. Very few studies (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018; Brunk, Visconti & Veresiu, 2013) have explored a holistic macro model demonstrating all institutional forces interacting and structuring acculturation. This call for more research from a macro perspective, once again, indicates considerations of studying ideologies in consumer acculturation.

Veresiu and Giesler (2018) interrogated how institutional actors across different fields shape an ethnic consumer subject. Their work on neo-liberal multiculturalism investigated how market actors dialectically negotiate (ethnic) consumer subjectivities through envisioning in the political sphere, exemplifying in the market research realm, equipping in the retail realm and embodying in the consumption sphere. While politicians envision what it means to be an ethnic consumer and place it on the national agenda, market analysts, strategists and consultants identify and legitimise such subjectivities with their findings by leading retailers to create market offerings, advertisements and physical manifestations, providing a template for and embracing ethnic consumer subjectivity, which is then embodied by immigrant and indigene consumers. Their findings indicated four consumer socialisation strategies through which institutional actors structure an ethnic consumer subject: (a) politicians envisioning the ethnic consumer subject as an ideal citizen type", (b) market researchers "exemplifying the ethnic consumer through data collection, analysis, reporting, and consulting", (c) retailers "equipping the multicultural marketplace with diverse ethnic" market offerings and communications and (d) "immigrants and indigenes...embodying their prescribed ethnic consumer identity

position” (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018, p. 554). This work is critical to understanding the commodification of migrants and socialisation strategies in the marketplace.

Analysing indigenes’ responses to immigrants’ consumer acculturation, Luedicke (2015) expanded the conceptualisation of consumer acculturation from a mere project that immigrant consumers pursue when adapting their identities and practices to a new environment. He demonstrated consumer acculturation as a relational and interactive adaptation process, where immigrants and indigenes reciprocally interact and adapt their consumption practices. On a different note, studying the construction and consumption of a racialised gated community in Italy, Veresiu (2020) demonstrated how spatial structural conditions of state-subsidised spaces can influence the consumer acculturation experience of poor immigrants from Romania and Bosnia. She identified three state-sponsored spatial governmentality strategies that highlight the transference of those immigrants into acculturating consumers to regional laws, norms and values that consumers employ to resist acculturation by retaining some of their nomadic cultural practices from home.

Using (post)colonial lenses, Touzani, Hirschman and Smaoui (2016) explored marketing communications and consumer acculturation in Tunisia, draped in colonial legacies and Western cultural influences. Their approach differed from traditional acculturation as they focused on acculturation *in situ*, which means that consumers in previously colonised countries can be acculturated without necessarily travelling to a foreign culture or directly interacting with such communities. Similarly, Olivotti (2016) also investigated, from a post-colonial perspective, discriminatory representations of minorities in TV advertising from multicultural Hongkong and highlighted the paradox of consumer identities as concurrently Chinese and multicultural. Likewise, Vihalemm and Keller (2011) looked into shaping inter-ethnic relations in Estonia among Russians and Estonians to understand the structuration of boundaries among ethno-linguistic groups in the context of global consumer culture. Using whiteness theory—which explicated ethnic/racial differences based on power, privilege and oppression—to conceptualise ethnic/racial relations in Western societies, Burton (2009) conducted non-white readings of whiteness and posited consumption as acceptance/resistance of whiteness. Bangladesh has a long history of being colonised—although not directly connected to Sweden—and hence, this research can potentially expand our post-colonial understanding of immigrants’ acculturation experiences.

## **Acculturation and the Marketplace**

Demangeot, Broderick and Craig (2015, p. 118) “conceptualised the notion of ‘multicultural marketplaces’ as place-centred environments (physical or virtual) where the marketers, consumers, brands, ideologies and institutions of multiple cultures converge at one point of concurrent interaction, while also being potentially

connected to multiple cultures in other localities". Kipnis, Broderick and Demangeot (2014) investigated how mainstream consumers exposed to a wide gamut of local, foreign and global cultural meanings in multicultural marketplaces construct their identities beyond local, global and glocal alternatives to inform culture-based brand meanings. To understand how multi-racial consumers articulate their racial identity, Harrison, Thomas and Cross (2015) interrogated the lived experiences of two distinct races of women to demonstrate how they engage with the marketplace to alleviate racial conflicts and legitimise the liminal space they inhabit. According to Jamal (2003), in a multicultural marketplace, marketers and diverse groups of consumers co-exist, interact and adapt to each other, resulting in a dialectic marketer-consumer relationship. Studying ethnic minorities and mainstream consumers in the U.K., he demonstrated that the multicultural marketplace enables culture swapping and contributes to more acceptance, tolerance and inclusion in the consumer culture.

Consumer acculturation studies have interrogated the role of the marketplace by investigating multicultural marketplaces (Demangeot, Broderick & Craig, 2015; Jamal, 2003; Kipnis, Broderick & Demangeot, 2014), marketer acculturation (Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999), consumptionscapes (Veresiu, Visconti & Giesler, 2011), consumer-marketer interactions in the multi-ethnic marketplace (Harrison, Thomas & Cross, 2015), marketing to ethnic minorities (Peñaloza, 2018), market-mediated multiculturalisation (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018) and understanding gender (Cruz & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015) and religious (Izberk-Bilgin, 2015) issues in the marketplace. Furthermore, consumer acculturation studies have also looked into marketing communication by exploring multi-racial and multi-ethnic representations (Bristor, Lee & Hunt, 1995; Borgerson & Schroeder, 2002; Mastro & Stern, 2003; Törngren & Ulver, 2020; Weinberger & Crockett, 2018), gender and multicultural issues in advertising (Branchik & Chowdhury, 2013; Stern, 1999) and representation of ethnicities, such as Black (Crockett, 2008), Asian (Shankar, 2015) or non-White ethnicities (Burton, 2009) in general, as well as more critical issues, such as racialised otherness (Hu, Whittler & Tian, 2013) and representational fetishisation (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2018) and by employing a post-colonial lens (Olivotti, 2016; Touzani, Hirschman & Smaoui, 2016). However, scant theoretical attention has been paid to exploring how migrant consumers leverage their socio-cultural environments and marketplace resources (Veresiu & Giesler, 2011). Veresiu and Giesler (2018) focused on the institutional marketplace actors shaping an ethnic consumer subject in the multicultural marketplace bounded by neo-liberal ideology. Nevertheless, there is still a lack of research exploring how multi-ethnic populations experience the marketplace (Harrison, Thomas & Cross, 2015). This study is an attempt to understand how Bangladeshi immigrants in Sweden experienced the marketplace in terms of gender ideologies.

On the other side of the coin, researchers have also explored marketer acculturation because understanding how marketers interact with consumers coming from

different cultures is important for marketers and consumers in the global marketplace (Peñaloza, 1994; Peñaloza & Gilly, 1999; Khairullah & Khairullah, 2015). Peñaloza and Gilly (1999) enquired about marketers' processes of multicultural learning and adaptation and posited a 'marketer acculturation process' for marketers to cater to a culturally diverse group of consumers—that comprises learning and adaptation processes deployed by marketers—highlighting the dialectical relationship among marketers, consumers and the contemporary marketplace. Borgerson and Schroeder (2002) studied visual representations in marketing communication from an ethical and race perspective by analysing representations of the exotic Other in marketing manifestations such as advertising. Stern (1999) discussed the impact of gender and multicultural issues in advertising at the intersection of race/ethnicity. In this study, I also used gender-transgressive advertising as prompts to elicit responses on how consumers understand marketplace representations.

### **Consumer Acculturation Studies on Gender**

Consumer research scholars have studied gender within the context of consumer acculturation and migration (Chytкова, 2011; Cruz & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Özçaglar-Toulouse & Peñaloza, 2011; Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). However, the focus of these studies has been on identity formation, rather than on how consumers navigate ideological conflicts beyond their identities. The seminal works on acculturation and gender by Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytкова (2011) are highly relevant to this research because they touched upon dichotomous gender discourses that migrant consumers draw from.

Studying poor migrant women from rural areas living in a Turkish squatter, Üstüner and Holt (2007) critiqued the idea of post-modern consumer acculturation and the notion of individual hybrid identity projects. The authors highlighted how post-modern acculturation projects are implausible due to the hegemony of consumer culture, ideological conflicts between the majority and minority cultures and a dearth of economic, social and cultural capital. They debunked previous studies that failed to consider socio-cultural structures that shape consumer acculturation and introduced the notion of dominated consumer acculturation. Their 'dominated' model postulated three modes of acculturation: migrants rejecting the dominant ideology and reinstating their home culture in their host environments, collectively in ritual pursuit of the dominant ideology as myth through ritualised consumption or abandoning both, resulting in a 'shattered identity project'.

Chytкова (2011) studied the negotiation of gender roles of Romanian female immigrants in Italy as an inextricable part of consumer acculturation in a new context. She demonstrated that immigrant women's understanding of the home and host culture is informed by gender discourses in both cultures. The author showcased how those migrant women constructed unlimited numbers of fluid,

hybrid and context-dependent gender identities on a spectrum with discursive resources from normative gender ideologies from the home and more extreme gender ideologies in the host culture. Chytkova (2011) found that the acculturation process produced gender identity positions placed on a continuum, where the traditional delineation of gender roles informed by normative discourses from the home culture is at one end and the more progressive modern woman myth from the host culture at the other end of the spectrum. Thus, migrant women can use various combinations of these two discourses to construct and perform their fluid and context-based gender identities. Chytkova (2011) argued that even migrant women with low capital—within the conditions prescribed by Üstüner and Holt (2007) without legitimisation of minority culture and conflicting gender ideologies—can gain the emancipatory influence of post-modern consumer acculturation and construct hybrid gender identities. Although Chytkova (2011) challenged the findings of Üstüner and Holt (2007) by arguing that low capital resources do not necessarily result in ‘shattered identity projects’ and marginalisation of the consumer culture and refuted the conditions that structure post-modern consumer acculturation, she also agreed that consumers are bounded by certain socio-cultural conditions.

Another relevant study was conducted by Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004) who explored South Asian—including Bangladeshi—women in the UK. They argued how migrant consumers use multiple identities across diverse cultural settings—that are contextually dependent and performed through consumption—“to negotiate and navigate cultural and consumer behavioural borders” (p. 211). They provided an expanded understanding of how post-modern ethnicity, identity, self and consumption—within families, households and peers—interact and how these migrant consumers navigate their diasporic multiple identities across their home and host cultures. Lindridge, Hogg and Shah’s (2004) focus on cultural negotiations in a bi-cultural border crossing setting, within post-assimilationist acculturation research—although they only studied second-generation immigrants—is relevant to this study.

Two conference papers can also be deemed relevant. Özçaglar-Toulouse and Peñaloza (2011) offered a multi-cultural understanding of gender. Studying second-generation Turkish men in France, they investigated how masculine ideologies, norms and practices of fatherhood are played out in diverse and multiple cultural contexts. Investigating Southeast Asian migrants in New Zealand, Cruz and Buchanan-Oliver (2015) looked into how consumption practices and marketplace resources enabled these skilled migrant men to perform remasculination strategies.

## **Problems in Consumer Acculturation Studies**

As demonstrated in this section, previous studies within consumer acculturation—particularly those that have taken a post-assimilationist theoretical viewpoint in

exploring migrant consumers' consumption practices—has predominantly studied identity negotiation of migrant consumers (Luedicke, 2011). These studies (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytkova, 2011; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) have demonstrated that consumer acculturation is a process that ends with migrant consumers' inhabiting various identity positions as outcomes. However, although these studies have determined how these identity positions are structured by various home and host cultural ideologies—Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) also discussed transcultural influences—they have not focused on understanding how these migrant consumers navigate this process of ideological contestation. More specifically, their focal point has been on understanding identities, and not ideologies. Investigating migrant consumers' navigation of contesting ideologies is critical because it can provide an understanding of the power relations for immigrants in mobility-driven global societies, filled with tensions and polarising ideological conflicts (Ulver, 2022; 2021). This research addresses this important omission in consumer acculturation studies.

Moreover, as demonstrated in the previous section, only a few studies within consumer acculturation literature have investigated gender (Chytkova, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), an intersection that needs further exploration. Furthermore, it is necessary to expand our understanding of how these immigrant consumers navigate tensions in terms of conflicting gender ideologies. Hence, the current study is positioned at the juncture of research frontiers of consumer acculturation and gender to resolve such deficiency. Finally, while previous research has investigated multi-racial or ethnic marketplace (Harrison, Thomas & Cross, 2015; Kipnis, Broderick & Demangeot, 2014; Visconti et al., 2014), to date, little consideration has been paid to examining market-mediated commodification of migrant consumers (Ogada & Lindberg, 2022; Veresiu & Giesler, 2018), which this study also embarked on.

## Quilting the Theoretical Tapestry

In this final part of this chapter, I want to turn your attention to the blending of all previously reviewed disquisitions in this chapter. The first sub-section discusses the post-structuralist gender lens I took in this study. It informed the analysis of this research, and hence, it is important to review it. The second sub-section borrows a synthesised model of consumer acculturation within CCT to demonstrate a holistic post-assimilationist consumer acculturation model. The next sub-section starts with a discussion of the necessity to adopt a 'transcultural' perspective over a 'multicultural' one. It introduces the notion of 'transculturation' from Fernando Ortiz and highlights the relevance of employing the concept within consumer acculturation literature. The fourth sub-section draws on the concept of



transculturation and dovetails it with the existing understanding of consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies to advance an understanding of ‘gender transculturation’ to answer the research question. I provide arguments about the necessity and suitability of this concept for this study.

The next sub-section delves into four different forms of gender ideologies, coalesced from various prior literature on gender and ideologies, relevant for this study: (1) patriarchal traditional, (2) egalitarian, (3) transgressive and (4) religious (Islamic) gender ideology. These four ideal types of gender ideologies were used to operationalise the analytical framework of this study to understand how respondents navigate these four contesting ideologies. Hence, in the final sub-section, these four ideal types of gender ideologies were used to construct a framework—and loosely inspired by a semiotic square—that would be used to analyse how respondents engage in gender transculturation. It ends with an overview of how this study took its theoretical departure from the concept of transculturation coupled with a theoretical understanding of consumer acculturation (post-assimilationist consumer acculturation theory) and gender (post-structuralist feminist/gender lens) using the analytical lens of the four ideal types of ideologies.

## **A Post-structuralist Gender Lens**

Most contemporary works on gender within CCT have adopted a post-structuralist worldview (Bettany et al., 2010). Dobscha and Ostberg (2021) argued that with an increasing conservative backlash against ‘the gender ideology’ in gender studies, gender scholarship in consumer research needs to take a feminist perspective to achieve a more equal society. This study, therefore, used a post-structuralist conceptualisation of gender lens to explore migrant consumers. Such a post-structuralist feminist perspective provides a more critical engagement with gender. Bettany et al. (2010) highlighted the importance of adopting a post-structuralist theoretical gender lens to accentuate the constructedness of gender and expose the challenges and adversities that men and women encounter with dominant discourses as well as to unveil the implications of these normative influences structured by neo-liberal ideologies. “The post-structuralist approach allows consumer and marketing academics to unpick and open for scrutiny, among other things, these normalizing discourses embedded within marketing, advertising and consumer offerings, which consumers are negotiating with to shape the gender terrain” (Bettany et al., 2010, p. 17). This viewpoint signposts my beliefs pertaining to gender and has informed the study’s analysis.

Based on a post-structuralist perspective, gender is produced through discourses, language and text, and thus has a connection to ideology. This approach facilitates the understanding of how socio-cultural norms and practices are gendered, as well as how language reflects and reproduces gender. Thus, the adoption of such a theoretical lens allows us to investigate and identify everyday knowledge, power

and discourse. Gender identity is a product of complex discursive practices where gender, sexuality and desire produce each other through repeated bodily acts. It is our notions of what signifies gender that determine how we interpret the biological body. Post-structural feminism is inspired by the postmodernism and deconstructionism movements and the works of authors such as Derrida and Foucault that brought discourse and language as the focal point mediating everything. Moreover, it questions the hegemony and socially dominant discourses that methodically subjugates women and other marginalised groups in society and strives to create 'heightened openness' in society that equally values diverse perspectives (Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Bristor & Fischer, 1993; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Scholars in CCT treat gender boundaries as fluid, producing various masculinities and femininities that contest gender stereotyping and taken-for-granted gender norms in societies (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Such a fluid and performative nature of gender was advanced by gender scholar and philosopher Judith Butler.

Butler first postulated the gender theory of performativity in her book *Gender Trouble* in 1990 and continued to rework and refurbish her ideas, as her views of performativity have changed over the course of time (Butler, 2011). The performativity of gender is not a single act; rather, it is a reiteration and a ritual, which gyrates around the notion that the expectation of gender produces the very phenomenon that it anticipates (Butler, 2011). Hence, gender is not a manifestation of our core identity and true sexuality of the self but rather produced through "the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal [sic] over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler, 1990, p. 45). As gender is constructed through this 'stylised repetition of acts', it conveys messages relating to the social object and can be understood through mundane acts of language, bodily gestures, movements and other multitude of other styles that signal a 'gendered self' (Butler, 2011). She emasculated the distinction between sex and gender, as she believes the former in some way reproduces the latter. Butler (2011, p. 12) also argued that the body is performatively constituted as it "is itself a construction, as are the myriad 'bodies' that constitute the domain of gendered subjects" and questioned "to what extent does the body *come into being* in and through the mark(s) of gender". According to Butler (1990), gender is a performance and is exhibited as we constantly act out or perform our assigned gender according to cultural and social expectations through our behaviour in everyday life. Butler's (1990, p. 34) notion of gender performativity can be discerned below:

Gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed. The challenge for rethinking gender categories outside of the metaphysics of substance will have to consider the relevance of Nietzsche's claim in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting,

becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything.” In an application that Nietzsche himself would not have anticipated or condoned, we might state as a corollary: There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very “expressions” that are said to be its results.

In her next treatise *Bodies That Matter* published three years later, Butler (1993) discussed how gender performativity is not about the mere performance of an individual but the ritualised socially constructed norm that is institutionalised and everyone adheres to. She argued that discourses construct the conception and constitution of bodies. Similar to Derrida’s notion of iteration, Butler’s (1993, p. 2) notion of performativity is not “the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather” the “reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains”. She went on to explicate how gender is a fluid discourse that is constantly deconstructed and reconstructed. Butler (1993) paved the way to illustrate how such gender norms are performed and can be challenged, which serves as a subversive move. In her more recent work, Butler (2004, p. 1) attempted to emphasise that despite gender being a doing, “one does not ‘do’ one’s gender alone”, rather “one is always ‘doing’ with or for another”. It is not an autonomous or mechanical activity being performed without our knowledge or willingness; it is instead a practice of extemporisation within limitations. She explored the meanings of ‘undoing’ hegemonic normative gender constructions in society (Butler, 2004). In CCT, scholars have worked extensively, taking inspiration from Butler’s gender performativity studying masculinities (Brownlie & Hewer, 2007; Coskuner-Balli & Thompson, 2012; Holt & Thompson, 2004; Moisio, Arnould & Gentry, 2013; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004) and alternative femininities (Martin, Schouten & McAlexander, 2006; Stevens, Cappellini & Smith, 2015; Zayer et al., 2012). In this study, gender is understood through discourses of respondent narratives.

Thompson and Üstüner (2015) have studied gendered habitus with marketplace performances and social reproduction of dominant gender ideologies using Butler’s gender performativity theory in the context of women’s flat track roller derby. They explored the negotiation of relationships between derby grrrls’ resignifying performances of femininity and normalised inhibiting gender norms that embody their daily lives. The authors underscored the interrelationships that emerge between gender resignifications, contested via marketplace performances and cultural norms that govern gender practices and structure our way of doing gender. They indicated that gender performativity, through gender resignifications, challenges traditional dichotomous gender norms through parodies, paradoxical juxtapositions and subversions of normalised socio-cultural and symbolic boundaries of gender. Distinguishing between marketplace performance and gender performativity, Thompson and Üstüner (2015) postulated the notion of ‘ideological edgework’ as a ‘discursive struggle’ through which these women can performatively contest and

resist the prevailing normalised gender norms preserving their social legitimacy. According to Thompson and Üstüner (2015, p. 240):

...consumers' actions...are schematically structured by an embodied history of gender socialization and their material immersion in a system of dominant gender discourses, categories, distinctions, norms, and gendered practices [and thus] ...gender socialization predisposes men and women toward certain kinds of practices, emotional orientations, and modes of social interaction.

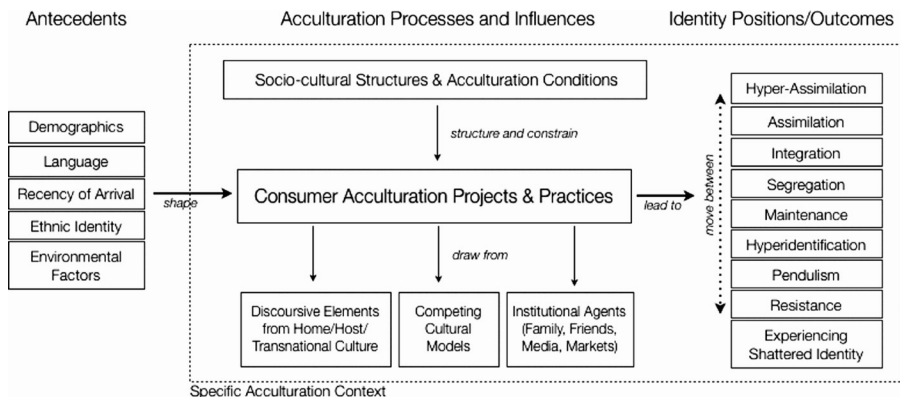
Therefore, an individual would be likely to perform their habituated gendered dispositions even in contexts where such over-socialised discourses are not hegemonic and imposed (Thompson & Üstüner, 2015). Through their analysis of social gender norms, habituated gender predispositions and embodied cultural capital, Thompson and Üstüner (2015) expanded our theoretical understanding of gender socialisation in terms of consumers' endeavours to change disposition from their primary gender socialisation. Hence, women who venture into the roller derby field with a more compatible gender socialisation are more likely to perform better and acquire more symbolic capital in comparison to women whose predispositions are less suited to the field, widening the imbalance between these two groups. However, their "naturalised gender norms and habituated tendencies (emanating from their primary socialization and histories of reiterative gender performances) begin to feel problematically constraining" (p. 257). Thus, their access to these new forms of cultural capital is circumscribed by their general predispositions and routinised habits informed by their gender socialisation. Hence, according to Thompson and Üstüner (2015, p. 258), "roller derby's market-mediated resignifications allow derby grrrls to challenge and even lessen the constraints imposed by their gender socialization and reiterative practices", even when they have lower chances for gaining status in the field.

The authors also explicated how performative practices can restructure gender socialisation. They posited that gender socialisation can be multifaceted, with these individuals navigating contesting gender ideologies emanating from their primary gender socialisation and their gender-transgressive roller derby field. Thus, Thompson and Üstüner's (2015, p. 258) conceptualisation—that focuses on a more gender-transgressive field—"provides an institutional means to develop latent capacities that have been ideologically foreclosed or repressed in their reiterative gender practices...[with] a dominant influence on a consumer's gender socialization". Thompson and Üstüner's (2015) ideological edgework can, therefore, be attributed to how these women navigate contesting gender ideologies that emanate from their primary gender socialisation and their necessity to invoke more transgressive gendered norms and behaviours in their field. Hence, this conceptualisation can be used to understand how migrant consumers navigate across contesting gender norms and discourses that emanate from immigrants' primary gender socialisation in their home culture vis-à-vis their gendered practices and

relations in the host culture. This study adopted a post-structuralist gender lens that influenced my interpretation of respondents' narratives.

## A Synthesised Post-Assimilationist Consumer Acculturation Model

Coalescing from various popular consumer acculturation frameworks within the CCT literature, Luedicke (2011) developed a synthesised consumer acculturation model that summarises important findings within the consumer acculturation literature. The model starts with a box of the left identifying the antecedents to migration that Peñaloza (1994) suggested. This is followed by a box in the middle about acculturation processes and influences, which includes socio-cultural structures that pattern consumer acculturation as posited by Üstüner and Holt (2007) on the top. At the bottom, various discursive elements—from the home culture, host culture and global consumer culture—cultural models and institutional agents are presented, as postulated by Peñaloza (1994), Oswald (1999) and Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005). Finally, the right boxes on the model illustrate various identity positions from consumer acculturation, usually regarded as outcomes of acculturation, from notable studies (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) within the literature.



**Figure 2.1 Synthesised Consumer Acculturation Model from Peñaloza (1994), Oswald (1999), Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytkova (2011)**  
Reproduced from Luedicke (2011)

Because I also took a theoretical departure in this study from post-assimilationist consumer acculturation theory, this synthesised model by Luedicke (2011) was used in the interpretation of empirical materials and to place this study in theoretical conversation within the research stream. Elements from this model, such as identity

positions/outcomes, discursive elements from home/host/transnational culture, socio-cultural structures and acculturation conditions were used throughout this study.

## **Adopting a Transculturation Perspective**

### ***Acculturation to Transculturation***

Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz (1995 [1940]) introduced the notion of 'transculturation' as an alternative to the entrenched concept of acculturation, which was constructed and propagated by Anglo anthropologists in the 1930s. Ortiz (1995 [1940], p. 97) articulated his rationale for introducing the concept:

With the reader's permission, especially if he happens to be interested in ethnographic and sociological questions, I am going to take the liberty of employing for the first time the term *transculturation*, fully aware of the fact that it is a neologism. And I venture to suggest that it might be adopted in sociological terminology, to a great extent at least, as a substitute for the term *acculturation*, whose use is now spreading. *Acculturation* is used to describe the process of transition from one culture to another, and its manifold social repercussions. But *transculturation* is a more fitting term. I have chosen the word *transculturation* to express the highly varied phenomena that have come about in Cuba as a result of the extremely complex transmutations of culture that have taken place here, and without a knowledge of which it is impossible to understand the evolution of the Cuban folk, either in the economic or in the institutional, legal, ethical, religious, artistic, linguistic, psychological, sexual, or other aspects of its life.

Ortiz (1995 [1940]) argued about the necessity of this articulation, because transculturation moves beyond acculturation. It highlights a more holistic and complex transformative process of transmutation of cultures that a society goes through, because certain cultures are replaced through acculturation and certain cultures are displaced through deculturation and construction of a new blended culture (Taylor, 1991; Millington, 2007). He underscored the significance of using transculturation to understand the evolution of Cuban people in a socio-historical context that highlighted humans as the conveyors of cultures and casualty of changes in culture (Millington, 2007). Ortiz (1995 [1940]) underlined the incessant, radical and conflicting geographic, social and economic nature of transmigrations of the early settlers who had a capricious life, living in discord with their new host cultures. Transculturation is mostly employed in works within the context of Latin America (Millington, 2007). Ortiz (1995 [1940], pp. 102-103) concluded with his reasons for choosing transculturation:

I am of the opinion that the word *transculturation* better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not

consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word *acculturation* really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture, which could be defined as a deculturation. In addition it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation. In the end, as the school of Malinowski's followers maintains, the result of every union of cultures is similar to that of the reproductive process between individuals: the offspring always has something of both parents but is always different from each of them.

In the forward to Ortiz's (1940) book *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, famous anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski (1995 [1940], p. lix) discussed transculturation:

It is a process in which both parts of the equation are modified, a process from which a new reality emerges, transformed and complex, a reality that is not a mechanical agglomeration of traits, not even a mosaic, but a new phenomenon, original and independent. To describe this process the word *trans-culturation*, stemming from Latin roots, provides us with a term that does not contain the implication of one certain culture toward which the other must tend, but an exchange between two cultures, both of them active, both contributing their share, and both co-operating to bring about a new reality of civilization.

Malinowski indicated the phenomenon of transculturation is not a mere blending of two ideological systems, but rather considers the historic specificity and multiplicity by enabling the simultaneous concomitance and extinction of two cultures, engendering a new one. Although Malinowski's view perpetuated a positive interpretation of transculturation as a cooperative and equal exchange, recent accounts of transculturation—influenced by an anti-essentialist view—have paid more attention to the transgressive nature of transculturation, whereas scarce attention has been paid to the dark side of transculturation (Marotta, 2014). However, Ortiz (1995 [1940]) viewed transculturation as an unequal and ambivalent process in which people in a dominant culture impose transculturation, thus highlighting an asymmetry of power relations between cultures (Marotta, 2014). This is highly relevant to understanding how Swedish culture is imposed on Bangladeshi immigrants. Furthermore, “colonialism effectively epitomises this process” (Marotta, 2014, p. 95); hence, transculturation is dangerous for the non-dominant cultures.

Sharifonnasabi, Bardhi and Luedicke (2020) argued that glocalisation scholars have emphasised that localisation can enhance the diversity of cultures and mentioned concepts such as ‘creolization’ and ‘cultural hybridisation’, which share certain affinities with transculturation. They expressed that (p. 279-80):

Inherent in the glocalization perspective is the concept of cultural creolization, according to which ‘the peripheral culture absorbs the influx of meanings and

symbolic forms from the centre and transforms them to make them in some considerable degree their own’... Such creolization results in cultural hybridization where the fusion of two or more elements from different cultures results in a new cultural element.

Ortiz’s conceptualisation of ‘transculturation’ over ‘acculturation’ was based on the premise that acculturation was equated with assimilation. Nevertheless, while during the 1940s that was the case, works on consumer acculturation—not least within the consumer research literature—have evolved the concept of ‘acculturation’ over the last forty years since Berry and reduced its inadequacy common during Ortiz’s time. However, even today, scholars across various disciplines employ transculturation as a concept that provides a more potent description of cultures in today’s dominant and subaltern cultural exchanges (Coronil, 1995 [1940]; Hermann, 2007; Marotta, 2014). Furthermore, although acculturation cannot be reduced to assimilation in the literature, it still does not completely capture the complexity of transmutations and inter-meshing of cultures—the “intense, complex, unbroken process of transculturation of human groups all in a state of transition” (Coronil, 1995 [1940], p. xxvi; Marotta, 2014). Therefore, in this study, I adopted the concept of transculturation—differentiating it from the concept of acculturation—to understand migrant consumers’ navigation of ideological tensions and advance the concept of ‘gender transculturation’.

### ***Multicultural to Transcultural***

The fundamental tenet of multiculturalism has been described as the ‘politics of recognition’ (Taylor, 1992)—recognising, being open to and integrating the differences, distinctness and individuality of diverse cultures and communities, which has led Western countries to articulate multicultural policies that acknowledge, accommodate and preserve cultural diversity, particularly those of minority or immigrant cultures within a divergent majority culture (Fisher, 2004). However, it is not just about celebrating cultural differences but enacting public policies, legislations and rights of ethnic acculturating minorities to integrate those differences (Kymlicka & Norman, 2000). Ulver and Laurell (2020, p. 480) indicated that “this crusade against the foreign Other is encapsulated in one of the sturdiest conceptual pillars of the contemporary conflict between liberals and the far right in Europe and the United States—namely, multiculturalism”.

With the ‘failure of multiculturalism’, there is a “widespread agreement in both scholarly and policy debates that we are now entering a ‘post-multicultural’ era” that “seeks to overcome the perceived limits of a naive or misguided multiculturalism while avoiding the oppressive reassertion of homogenising nationalist ideologies” (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014, p. 52; Kymlicka, 2010, p. 98; Lentin & Titley, 2012; Vertovec, 2010). Prominent scholars, such as Kymlicka (2010) and Vertovec (2010), have used post-multiculturalism to highlight the celebration of cultural diversity and sustenance of a collective national identity.



While critique against multiculturalism has existed since its inception, such debates have recently intensified (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014).

Post-multiculturalists have posed several critiques against multiculturalism, highlighted by Kymlicka (2010): (1) celebrating cultural differences pays no heed to and does not attempt to improve the socio-economic inequality of ethnic migrants; (2) commemorating certain cultural practices can often be perilous and deceptive, running the risk of being offensive and intolerable or conversely trivialised or commodified; (3) multiculturalism can animate within-group cultural practices, disregarding blend of cultures, thereby reproducing ethnic minorities as the ‘Other’; and (4) it can also reproduce unequal power relationships within acculturating minorities, thereby privileges certain institutional ways of doing things and marginalising the disenfranchised within the community. According to Lentin and Titley (2012), the ‘multicultural fantasy in Europe’ have aggrandised cultural differences, distinctiveness and relativism over solidarity, cohesion and collective values.

However, research in the field of sociology has revealed that post-multiculturalism is also a closely contested concept, that reproduces—rather than neutralises—the challenges of multiculturalism (Gozdecka, Ercan & Kmak, 2014). Gozdecka, Ercan and Kmak (2014, pp. 52-53) identified:

five trends that are observable in nearly all immigrant-receiving countries albeit in different degrees and intensification. These entail: (1) an excessive focus on gender inequality within traditional minority cultures; (2) the shift from ethnicity and culture towards religion (in particular Islam); (3) the increasing emphasis on social cohesion and security; (4) the emergence of new forms of racism; (5) the relativization of international and transnational human rights law. We argue that taken together, these tendencies herald a retreat from rather than revival of multiculturalism and pave the way for the emergence of new forms of racism in culturally plural societies.

Thus, it is critical to move beyond the conceptualisation of multiculturalism. One such notion that can be turned towards is that of ‘transcultural’ (Ortiz, 1995 [1940]). As highlighted in the introduction chapter, ‘transcultural’ has been described as conceptually different from the notion of ‘multicultural’ (and ‘intercultural’) by considering the conception of culture not as homogenous and essentialist, but depicting the post-modern complexity and embeddedness of cultures. “Transculturation posits culture as a relational phenomenon... [as] tensions exist between the need to challenge essentialism and the use of essentialist notions...to criticize the exploitation of colonized cultures” (Rogers, 2006, p. 474). Imbert (2014)<sup>11</sup> argued that ‘transculturalism’ deals with encounters between dominant and

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<sup>11</sup> Imbert (2014, pp. 21-22) argued that transculturalism repudiates the tenet of “a pure origin and an authentic homogeneous identity.... Transculturalism is not linked to the acknowledgment of an irrefutable fact such as the definition of an established culture joined to a nation state, casting a stereotypical identity on communities. It is closer to a performative speech act (Austin 1962) such

non-dominant cultures, and unlike multiculturalism, a transcultural perspective views individuals as relational and defined by their cultural encounters, instead of being rooted in a time or place, and therefore, promotes a dialogical relationship based on egalitarianism.

Literary and cultural scholar Mikhail Epstein (2009) argued that while globalism and multiculturalism—propelled by Western neo-liberal ideologies—engender “no freedom of choice for the individual who is destined to be globalized and homogenized or serve as a specimen of some ethnic or gender identity” (p. 329), transculture—“a new sphere of cultural development that transcends borders of traditional cultures”—offers “the freedom from one’s own culture” (p. 330). Epstein (2009) drew conceptual parallels between ‘transculture’ and philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of ‘culturology’. The fundamental tenets of culturology are ‘outsideness’, ‘being beyond’, or ‘exotopy’, meaning that one can achieve awareness about the ‘essence’ of a culture, from the standpoint of others, by stepping outside the bastions of that culture (Epstein, 2009). He postulated that “transculture is the sphere of all possible differences from existing cultures inasmuch as we cognize them and distance ourselves from them...‘being beyond’ in relation to the entire cultural realm” (p. 332). Therefore, “transculture lies both inside and outside of all existing cultures as a *Continuum*, encompassing all of them...[it] is a unity of all cultures and noncultures, that is, of those possibilities that have not yet been realized” (p. 333).

In this research, I adopted a transcultural perspective by showcasing how four different ideal types of gender ideologies, emanating from various discursive elements—home cultural, host cultural and transcultural—and socio-cultural structures, shape migrant consumers’ ideological navigation.

## Conceptualisation of Gender Transculturation

My reasons for moving beyond acculturation to transculturation are four-fold. First, the idea of transculturation ascended from the need to view border crossing and assimilation into a new culture from a non-white post-colonial lens. Second, transculturation is a “system that resists and contests the power of domination” (Arrizón, 1999, p. 288). Consumer acculturation literature discussed how migrant consumers often resist their dominant host culture in various ways (Peñaloza, 1994) that challenge hegemonic powers in the society. Furthermore, the fundamental tenet of ideology, as I illustrated before, is that the dominant group or the ruling class in

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as ‘I declare that I am independent of any origin and that I belong to myself and so is it for every human being. As a corollary, I meet alterity on these terms’. This alludes to a dynamic which establishes immediately a reciprocal equality, instead of an exploration of pre-eminence based on linkages to an imagined pure and superior origin. Such a speech act helps create less conflictive encounters that are more attuned to relations”.

society wields disproportionate power and that such power can be contested by the marginalised groups. Hence, a transculturation perspective highlights resistance against the hegemonic accounts. Third, transculturation moves beyond the “hierarchical binaries of imperialism/neo-colony, centre/periphery, identity/otherness” and “straddles, mixes and disrupts” (Millington, 2007, p. 257), akin to how I employed diverse gender discourses to go beyond the dichotomous binary of patriarchal–egalitarian discourses. Fourth, Millington (2007) argued that transculturation is connected with autonomy and resistance to global consumer culture and neo-liberalism. Hence, transculturation offers a multicultural, neo-liberal and global outlook. To sum up, transculturation is a “post-colonial stance of political resistance” to “subvert, transgress, undermine, oppose or obstruct” the dominant “power and authority” (Millington, 2007, p. 257). Millington (2007) indicated that the term was coined by Ortiz as an act of resistance.

“Transculturation is fundamentally involved in the formation and continuous shaping of cultures” (Hermann, 2007, p. 257). As a concept, transculturation can be used to explain “the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another” (Ortiz, 1995 [1940], p. 102). Hermann (2007) adopted the concept of transculturation to describe “the adoption of cultural practices and their socio-cultural recontextualization”, which is “combined with the discourses of recipient culture” (p. 257). Therefore, my use of the concept of transculturation denotes the ideological navigation of migrant consumers. As discussed in the introduction, the concept of transculturation demonstrates the complexity, integration and entwinedness of—and hence, a bridge between—society’s macro-level discourses and individuals’ micro-social cultural forms (Lehmkuhl, Lüsebrink & McFalls, 2015; Marotta, 2014; Ortiz, 1995 [1940]; Welsch, 1999). In this study, understanding migrant consumers’ ideological navigation involves their drawing from gender ideologies at the macro level and employing such discursive resources at the micro level, which is understood through their cultural practices, beliefs and views about gender relations and expressed in their talks.

One can argue against the suitability of the concept of transculturation because the notion highlights how a society undergoes changes in its culture through the emplacement of new cultures and the displacement of culture through deculturation and construction of a new blended culture. However, in this study, I am not attempting to demonstrate the changes that the Swedish culture has gone through emplacement, displacement, or amalgamation, which remains outside the scope of this study. The process of transculturation should not be viewed “as something that only occurs in the recipient culture (or the recipient group)”, it is instead a multi-directional “borrowing and lending between cultures” (Hermann, 2007, p. 257; Rosaldo, 1995). Therefore, my use of transculturation signifies how Bangladeshi immigrants engage in cultural exchange in their transition from one culture to another drawing from diverse discursive resources and reproducing a form of blended culture.

Based on the previous discussion on consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies migrant consumers potentially draw from their early gender socialisation in their home culture, but they also engage in changes in their gender socialisation as they encounter diverse and conflicting gender ideologies in their new host culture. The concept of transculturation—that “expresses the process of transition from one culture to another” (Ortiz, 1995 [1940], p. 102)—“readily lends itself to being thus modified” (Coronil, 1995 [1940]; Hermann, 2007, p. 258). Hence, in this study, borrowing and blending the concepts of transculturation with consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies, I propose the conceptualisation of *gender transculturation* defined as *how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies*.

## **Four Ideal Types of Gender Ideologies**

This study is located within the Bangladeshi migrant community in Sweden, and hence, four different ideal types of gender ideologies are bound to the context of this research. The socio-cultural context is central in understanding ideologies because the context enacts and reproduces ideologies (Fairclough, Mulderrig & Wodak, 2011; Gyawali, 2020; Thompson, 1984). Wodak (1997) also suggested that studies in gender and discourse should adopt a context-sensitive approach. Hodge and Kress (1988, p. 3) posited the notion of ideological complexes, which is a:

functionally related set of contradictory versions of the world, coercively imposed by one social group on another on behalf of its own distinctive interests or subversively offered by another social group in attempts at resistance in its own interests.

According to Hodge and Kress (1988), ideologies are complex structures delineated by conflicts and contradictions, which are embedded in discourses. The four conflicting—and yet to some extent commensurable—ideal types of ideologies in the context of this study used for analysing consumer discourses in this research are: *patriarchal traditional ideology*, *gender-egalitarian ideology*, *gender-transgressive ideology* and *Islamic gender ideology*. These were compiled from various literature on gender and ideologies and discussed below.

### ***Traditional Patriarchal Ideology***

As described in the ‘gender’ section of this chapter, the traditional patriarchal ideology of gender has been in place for thousands of years and is still the pervasive and hegemonic social norm. Patriarchy is “a system of rule, a way to organize households, an ideology, and more” and has been “the dominant gender ideology... capable of setting the terms of normal, just, and proper arrangements for political and social power” (Duerst-Lahti, 2008, p. 165). It has “evolved rather than developed from conscious theorizing or as an identity associated with a movement” (Duerst-Lahti, 2008, p. 170). The concept of hegemonic masculinity, as explicated

before, by Connell (2005) has aptly highlighted this phenomenon. The notion of patriarchy can be presented in the following excerpt from Nash (2020, p. 43):

Patriarchy is a system of relationships, beliefs, and values embedded in political, social, and economic systems that structure gender inequality between men and women. This system of inequitable social relations is woven into the political, social, cultural, and economic institutions of a society, as well as in private and domestic relations. Attributes seen as “feminine” or as pertaining to women are undervalued, while attributes regarded as masculine or pertaining to men are privileged. Patriarchal relations structure both the private and public spheres, ensuring that men dominate both domestic and public life.

Fischer (2015) indicated that despite the extensive change in contemporary Western societies with women being increasingly elevated to previously male-dominated workplaces and more shared household roles, the patriarchal gender hierarchy still benefits men over women in all spheres of society. In a similar vein, contemporary portrayals of men are still imbued with traditional patriarchal ideology (Östberg, 2013). Despite the emergence of a wide assortment of masculinities—as described in the ‘gender’ section of this chapter—men are still depicted in traditional roles of protectors and breadwinners and thus, patriarchal ideology dominates the gender order and has not really been threatened (Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019). The pervasiveness of a male-dominant system can be exemplified through the permanence of various forms of patriarchies—such as neopatriarchy, neo-liberal patriarchy, transnational patriarchies, structural gender inequalities, transnational intersectionalities and globalising masculinities (Hearn & Hein, 2015)—and counter-movements against gender equality and transgression.

Patriarchal ideology has been proliferated by neo-liberal and capitalist systems that govern societies. Capitalism and neo-liberalism have brought the marketplace to the forefront of ideological transmission. It provides consumers with material and symbolic resources that they use to orchestrate their lives. According to Roux and Izberk-Bilgin (2018), neo-liberalism is a dominant political ideology used to structure, manage and steer societies and economies, particularly in the West. It promotes free-market competition, deregulation, privatisation and individual responsibility – everything that characterises most societies and economies today. Neo-liberalism corresponds with the ideal of market capitalism, prioritising individual interests of profit maximisation and wealth accumulation over societal and collective welfare aiming at equal distribution of wealth. The ideology of neo-liberalism attempts to reduce the involvement of the state in the market system through the privatisation of state assets and deregulation (Fitchett, Patsiaouras & Davies, 2014). Veresiu and Giesler (2018, p. 555) reviewed the implication of neo-liberal ideologies in the consumption sphere:

The primary explanation for this shift is the widespread adoption of neoliberalism as a dominant way of organizing societies and managing economies... [that] favors free-

market competition, deregulation, privatization, optimization, and individual responsabilization... 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.

Fitchett, Patsiaouras and Davies (2014, p. 497) argued that within CCT, “neo-liberalism is generally used in the negative to refer to the damaging effects of modern forms of capitalism and the inequalities, crises and social destruction that its critics attribute to the implementation of neo-liberal policies”. Neo-liberalism helps proliferate, cement and *ossify* traditional gender ideology. Traditional gender identity has been an inextricably intertwined part of the marketplace for a long time. It is still the dominant ideology that permeates the Swedish marketplace as well as every other. While there are consumers who implicitly embrace the dominant representations of consumer identity and lifestyle ideals portrayed in marketing efforts, such as advertisements, there are those who consciously digress from these ideological inducements. Even in societies where gender transgression is seen as politically correct or where people are making efforts to uphold and disseminate such ideals, the hegemony still holds a more gendered viewpoint and values.

The notion of patriarchy transcends socio-cultural contexts because it remains hegemonic throughout the world. However, in this study, it has another relevance, because the respondents of this study, who are immigrants from Bangladesh, come from a society heavily dominated by patriarchy. Bangladesh is a patriarchal culture with conservative social mores, ‘normative’ binary gender framework and little gender equality (Anwary, 2015; Blunch & Das, 2015; Balk, 1997), and hence, very little acceptance of gender equality and transgression. Chowdhury (2010, p. 301) argued that “the current moment in contemporary Bangladesh is witnessing a shift in the representations of ideal womanhood away from earlier anti-colonialist and nationalist era models”. This was aptly described by Rozario (2006, p. 368):

Bangladeshi women are subjected to patriarchal norms that are legitimated by both the cultural and the religious values of the country. In recent years these patriarchal norms have been challenged by women's increased physical mobility, a consequence of modernity and globalisation. There has however been a backlash against women's new roles. At the same time, a significant proportion of the newly mobile women, including university students, is adopting the *burqa* (veil), a practice associated with modern Islamist movements and previously almost non-existent in Bangladesh. ...this is related to the spread of ‘Islamist’ movements, modernist forms of Islam which have grown up over the last century or so as part of the Muslim response to modernity.

This demonstrates that patriarchal and religious ideologies are inextricably intertwined in Bangladesh<sup>12</sup>. Paradoxically, Bangladesh is one of the few countries

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<sup>12</sup> This is further discussed in the fourth ideal type of gender ideologies, later in this sub-section.

to legally recognise the transgender and gender non-binary population (TGNB)—locally known as *hijras*—as a third gender (McNabb, 2018). Popularly known as eunuchs, hermaphrodites, transvestites and transsexuals, *hijras* are intersex or male-bodied individuals who identify as females (Hossain, 2017). In 2013, by officially recognising hijras, Bangladesh permitted them to use the third gender in their identity documents/passports, cast votes, and run for office (McNabb, 2018). This politico-legal recognition contests patriarchal and Islamic ideologies, which, to a large extent, govern politics in Bangladesh (Shahriar, 2020). *Hijras* uphold their Islamic beliefs but concurrently engage in Hindu myths, rites and practices (Hossain, 2012a), pushing the religious envelope. Furthermore, Hijras lack cultural and economic capital (Bourdieu, 1984) as they are rejected by families and forced to live in destitution, working as prostitutes or beggars. Additionally, their sacred rituals of *badhai*<sup>13</sup> and *birit*<sup>14</sup> (Hossain, 2012a) have become violent as they hold people hostage over money. “While the international community views the recognition of a third gender as a progressive socio-legal advance in the obtaining of sexual rights in a Muslim majority Bangladesh, locally, the hijras are understood as a special group of people born with ‘missing’ or ambiguous genitals delinked from desire” (Hossain, 2017, p. 1418), and hence, oppressed, stigmatised and looked down on socially, which indicates a lack of gender transgression (Shahriar, 2020). While a third gender is publicly recognised and women’s empowerment has improved, people are still averted to homosexuality (Chaney, Sabur & Sahoo, 2020) and embrace patriarchal and normative gender ideals.

In contrast to patriarchy, feminism has always been considered a political ideology because it has challenged the patriarchy “that was both unnamed and made largely invisible due to its hegemonic position” (Duerst-Lahti, 2008, p. 165). The gender-egalitarian ideology that I explore in the next section stems from feminist movements aimed to achieve gender equality (see previous sub-section on feminism).

### ***Gender-Egalitarian Ideology***

This study was conducted in Sweden, which serves as a good European example of an increasingly diverse ethnic and multicultural population. Although before the Second World War Sweden has been a country of emigration, it has become an immigration nation recently (Törngren & Ulver, 2020). In 2015, over 160,000 immigrants from the Global South sought asylum in Sweden during the global refugee crisis, the second highest in the EU (Ulver & Laurell, 2020). Nevertheless, it has been described by some scholars as ethnically and racially segregated in many socio-cultural spheres (Hübinette & Räterlinck, 2014), which has sparked heated political debates about the ‘failed integration’ of immigrants. Although the liberal

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<sup>13</sup> Playing tom-toms to confer blessings on new-borns in exchange of gifts

<sup>14</sup> Alms collection in the marketplace

strategy of multiculturalism is on the national agenda, as the racial and ethnic composition in Sweden has altered over the last few years with an influx of Asian and Muslim population to complement its white populace, studies on multicultural representations in the Swedish marketplace are scant and this topic deserves more attention (Törngren & Ulver, 2020; Törngren et al., 2020). With polarised political tensions about immigration in Sweden and ethnically diverse population, Sweden serves as a good context to understand conflicting ideologies and multicultural representations in the marketplace.

Gustafsson and Zheng (2006, p. 81-2) narrated that:

At the beginning of the century and up to World War II, very few immigrants lived in Sweden. Since then, many waves of immigrants have reached the country...early arrivals came from the other Nordic countries...Another route for entering Sweden is reserved for people seeking asylum and their relatives...Immigration to Sweden from countries in the Third World is a relatively new phenomenon.

Molander (2021) underscored that in Sweden, there are interesting ideological tensions and conflicts between the state-induced feminist ideals in a welfare society and traditional patriarchal ideal in the marketplace. The dual emancipation ideology of the Swedish state has attempted to overcome traditional gender norms. While this is particularly more palpable among the young urban middle class and liberal-minded individuals, there are more freedom and ways of being a man and woman and expressing one's gender than in most societies. For instance, men in non-traditional roles such as fathers take care of children, effeminate men are comparatively less stigmatised for their effervescent masculinity, women have more prerogative and egalitarianism and LGBTQ+ and non-binary individuals are more included and able to express themselves.

Sweden is considered one of the most equitable countries in terms of gender, with the Swedish state's long-term policy interventions to augment gender egalitarianism. Sweden has been called "the most gender equal country" (Ulver, 2019b, p.65), infused with egalitarian gender ideologies, ranking high in the Gender equality index with its low gender gap (Klasson & Ulver, 2015). Elements of gender fluidity—or as I term gender transgression—in Sweden can be traced back to 1654, when Queen Christina abdicated her throne, changed her name to Count Dohna, and started cross-dressing (Hines, 2018). However, a recent history of state feminism in Sweden dates back to the 1970s, when becoming gender equal was on the country's socio-political agenda thanks to feminist movements ushered in by media, pop culture and politics (Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019). In 1972, Sweden became the first country in the world to permit its citizens to legally undergo sex change (Hines, 2018). The Swedish state believes that society would reap benefits from unbinding gender norms (Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019). Sweden's progressive and shifting gender ideologies have influenced, for instance, fatherhood ideals (Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019;



Ostberg, 2019). Advertisements in the Swedish toy industry show boys with teddy bears and dolls, whereas girls play with monster trucks. Klasson and Ulver (2015) indicated how hegemonic masculinity in Sweden is gradually shifting to feminised masculinity. Ostberg (2019) cogently articulated how the contemporary model of manhood in ‘Scandinavian Man’—who are progressive, gender-neutral and well-groomed—threatens and astounds ‘real men’. However, he argued that this has, in fact, expanded the sphere that a ‘real man’ occupies. As a country, Sweden has been at the forefront of gender equality.

Molander (2021, pp. 4-5) cogently outlined the gender-egalitarian ideology—what she termed as ‘state ideology of double emancipation’—in Sweden:

This ideology defines the conditions under which individuals and families organise their lives concerning aspects such as childcare, participation in the labour force and consumption of market offerings. Sweden’s gender equality project of double emancipation is part of a larger ideological project where the state guarantees the rights of the individual so that she can be free from power relations that govern the market and within a family. Double emancipation aims not only to emancipate women from gendered expectations that exclude them from participating in the public realm, but also at emancipating men from being excluded from the private realm. ...the state ideology of double emancipation seeks a more gender equal situation, implying a more sensitive, caring, present and home-oriented masculinity ideal. ...The goal of double emancipation is for the parents to share both caretaking and breadwinning. Rather than preserving men’s dominance over women the ideology of double emancipation promotes a more gender-equal masculinity that offers the potential of sustained social change for men and gender relations.

Gender-related political agenda stems from Sweden’s distinct state ideology of gender equality. Government Offices of Sweden (2019) cogently outlined three welfare reforms that promote gender egalitarianism in Sweden: (1) in 1971, the commencement of separate income taxation for wife and husband that instigated more women to join the workforce, (2) in 1974, development of affordable public child care and (3) in 1974, Sweden became the first state to introduce gender-neutral paid parental leave policy. The government’s articulation and enforcement of workplace policies have significantly changed what it means to be a gender-neutral subject in Sweden. To realise its gender equality objectives, in a strategic initiative called ‘Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies’ (GMGA) programme, the Swedish government has authorised the Swedish Gender Equality agency to assist government agencies to adopt a gender outlook in all facets of all of their functions and to make it an integral part of every policymaking decisions (Swedish Institute, 2019). Furthermore, policies to transgress gender are a popular topic in political and parliamentary speeches and discussions in *Riksdag* (Swedish Parliament). For instance, in Sveriges Riksdag (2018), a proposal was in motion for a parliamentary decision to investigate the introduction of a legal third gender in Sweden. The Swedish government promotes its dual emancipation ideology through market-

mediated public gestures to accomplish social inclusion. Through their gender-related political agenda, the Swedish welfare state fosters social inclusion and enflames market competition by connecting the societal discourse of inclusion with the performance of the Swedish economy (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018). This political ideology places the gender-equal ideology on the national agenda and influences consumption in the marketplace.

While the confluence of gender and education can be traced back to the 1960s, the Swedish Ministry of Education and Research took over pre-school education from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs and cogently articulated their curriculum objective in 1998:

The ways in which adults respond to girls and boys, as well as the demands and expectations imposed on them [girls and boys] contribute to the shaping of girls' and boys' understanding of what is feminine and masculine. Pre-schools should work to counteract traditional gender and gender roles. Girls and boys in pre-schools should have the same opportunities to try and develop their abilities and interests without being limited by stereotyped gender roles. (Bayne, 2009, p. 131)

This can ameliorate gender stereotyping among Swedish children and their future decisions in the marketplace (Shutts et al., 2017). In 1998, the Swedish state restructured the pre-school curriculum to “counteract traditional gender and gender roles” and subvert conventional gender stereotypes to shape “girls’ and boys’ understanding of what is feminine and masculine” (Bayne, 2009, p. 131). Swedish classrooms have initiated experiments of constructing a gender-neutral society where children are taught to be not boys or girls—sharing same spaces and expressive opportunities, such as ungendered games and activities, with freedom of shaping their own gender identity—but just children, discarding gendered assumptions (Tissier-Desbordes & Visconti, 2019). Tissier-Desbordes and Visconti (2019, p. 309) highlighted this in the following excerpt:

Since 2011, some schools in Sweden have started experimenting the foundations of a gender-neutral society. In these schools, boys and girls share the same spaces (e.g. the same toilets), expressive opportunities (games and activities are not gendered), and are left free to form their own (gender) identity (schoolteachers call them by name or by using the genderless pronoun “hen”)

In 2012, Sweden became the first country in the world to adopt a gender-fair language reform and introduce a third gender pronoun *hen* in the Swedish cultural lexicon to augment existing pronouns *han* (he) and *hon* (she) (Gustafsson Sendén, Bäck & Lindqvist, 2015). This discursive practice has promoted values of gender inclusion and neutrality that influence such representations. Greta Edelstam, an Associate Professor at Danderyds Hospital, developed a new gender-neutral

examination chair—*henstolen* Kim (a *hen* chair ‘Kim’)—which is an out-turn of the introduction of *hen* in Swedish society.

### ***Gender-Transgressive Ideology***

Gender ideologies have been described as various manifestations existing on a continuum from patriarchal to equal, with various grey zones in between (Duerst-Lahti, 2008). As highlighted in the introduction chapter and the ‘gender’ section in this chapter, the recent agender movement has brought about a new form of ideology, which I call gender-transgressive ideology, adopting from other disciplines (Blackwood, 2005; Li-Vollmer & LaPointe, 2003; McGrath & Chananie-Hill, 2009; McGuffey & Rich, 1999; Rawson, 2018). At the beginning of this book, I distinguished the feminist objective to achieve gender equality—which is expressed in the form of gender-egalitarian ideology in the previous sub-section—and gender-transgressive ideology, which builds on but moves beyond to highlight the struggles of the LGBTQ+ community and achievement of equality beyond the binary genders.

Duerst-Lahti (2008, p. 178) posited that “in terms of research and twenty-first-century gender ideology, many gender ideologies and ideas seek to upset the dualism and add more poles to the equation”, such as “transgenderist efforts” or “gender neutral or for which gender is irrelevant”. Duerst-Lahti (2008, p. 180) highlighted that gender-transgressive ideology (as I call it):

arguably subsumes most of the gray zone, because its meaning is in great flux, and it has for many activists become an umbrella term in US politics. Its dimensions include challenges to fixed gender dualisms, especially in identities assigned at birth based upon genitalia, and beliefs about unhinging sexed bodies from norms for “gender performances.” Its dimensions also include efforts to create gender ambiguity by performing both genders, and/or to attempt human existence by an ideal of no gender.

Gender-transgressive ideology is driven by the United States through increased representations of the LGBTQ+ community in media and pop culture and subsequent market co-optation of such gender transgression by global brands. The use of gender transgression in marketing and advertisement has paved the way for the proliferation of this ideology outside the US, especially in Europe. This subsection describes this promulgation of gender-transgressive ideology through market co-optation and how it has been described within marketing and consumer research. Gramsci (1971, p.182) discussed how “a particular ideology, for instance, born in a highly developed country, is disseminated in less developed countries, impinging on the local interplay of combinations”. Ger and Belk (1996) explored the impact of globalisation on consumption patterns propagated by the dissemination of culture and values from one country to another. However, global consumer culture (GCC) has not resulted in local cultures getting subsumed in cultures of dominating countries as they appropriate global symbols to local realities

in a localised system of meanings, inducing cultural heterogeneity and ‘glocalisation’ (Appadurai, 1988; Sassatelli, 2007; Emontspool & Kjeldgaard, 2012). Advertising diffuses meanings and images of consumption ideologies (Appadurai, 1996; Thompson & Haytko, 1997) of globally dominant countries. Global consumer culture works as a catalyst to reproduce traditional gender norms, but it can also proliferate gender-transgressive ideologies, helping the achievement of a balanced outlook in essence.

A large number of gender-transgressive advertising stems from the United States and makes its way into other cultures. Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018) illustrated this by providing examples from the Italian fashion brand, Prada, which presaged this agender movement in 2014, by eradicating gender connotations, subverting the traditional male/female dichotomy and signifying ambiguity. The authors highlighted how other brands followed suit. In 2015, for instance, the UK high-end department store Selfridges launched its first agender assortment and an ‘Agender pop-up department store’, providing consumers with a unique genderless shopping experience that transcends the notion of gender, allowing them to explore the interplay between masculinity and femininity as they can based on their self-expression, personality, tastes, colour, fit and style (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018; Clark & Rossi, 2020). Masstige and fast-fashion brands followed suit, as Diesel launched its ‘gender-neutral’ couture, Zara unveiled its ‘ungendered’ clothing line and H&M came up with its ‘Denim United’ unisex collection (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Although the fashion industry is driving this trend, brands from multifarious industries, such as cosmetics, toys, beverages and perfumes have also jumped on the bandwagon<sup>15</sup>. Such gender-transgressive marketing, especially in the form of advertisements, has emerged in large numbers over the last four years and is used by a multitude of brands. In addition to these promulgations of representations, global norms and values are also propagated by Hollywood movies and TV shows in theatres and streaming services such as Netflix, HBO, Amazon Prime Video and Disney+, which are available in many countries, including Sweden. Thus, the neo-liberal global consumer culture proliferates gender transgression and Western ideologies.

The stereotypical models of gender have become more culturally complex, resulting in a broader identity position of masculine and feminine characteristics (Klasson & Ulver, 2015). Increasing co-optation and advertisements depicting gender transgression indicate that traditional gender beliefs are evolving and society is changing its lens on the role of gender. As traditional rules of gender are gradually

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<sup>15</sup> For instance: Mattel’s gender-neutral dolls, Åhlens’ ‘Break the Clothing Power Structure’ (*Bryt klädmaktsordningen*) campaign; Covergirl and Maybelline’s use of gender-fluid spokespersons; MQ and Louis Vuitton’s gender-bending clothing; Obsessive Compulsive Cosmetics and Fluide Beauty’s use of transgender models flaunting their lipstick collections; Thinx’s period-proof underwear for transmen; Axe’s use of gay and cross-dressing individuals; and the use of LGBTQ+ themes by various brands such as the Swedish Armed Forces and Västtrafik.

changing, it impacts how marketers connect with their consumers. To appeal to this *zeitgeist*, marketers are tapping into this trend with ‘gender-bending’ and ‘gender-blending’ in their communication toolkit (Avery, 2012; Stevens & Ostberg, 2011). Post-structural feminism—where this study took its departure from—challenges the traditional, fixed and binary gender categorisations and views gender as much more fluid, complex, processual, multi-layered, contentious, uncertain and shifting (Alvesson & Billing, 2009; Goulding & Saren, 2009). According to Stevens and Ostberg (2011, p.397):

Postmodernism has paved the way for new conceptualisations, representations and visual spectacles of both men and women in the marketplace, and the marketplace now provides a stage for all kinds of representations of men and women, which shake up traditional ideas about the ‘masculine’ and the ‘feminine’...about the mind and the body in consumption, and about gender roles in consumer culture. Gender blending and gender bending have thus been thrown into the marketing communication mix alongside traditional gender stereotyping and gender categories, and this has had surprising, challenging, provocative and at times, shocking results.

Stevens and Ostberg (2011) posited the emergence of diversified and nuanced forms of masculinity/femininity in the marketplace that reverberate the ‘multiplicity’ of gendered positions and identities. In a similar vein, Avery (2012, p. 322) articulated how instances of advertisements with gender transgression essentially represent co-optation by markets:

Marketers are gender-bending their brands, taking products that had been targeted to one sex and targeting them to the other. In the postmodern era, both men and women have engaged in gender-bending consumption, co-opting the consumption practices and products of the opposite sex to play with definitions of gender and support new ideologies.

Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018) argued that people are socially and culturally punished as they step outside the dominant gender boundary. For instance, when men are depicted in women’s clothing, it generates a lot of attention. Historically, some groups have been more vulnerable to and disadvantaged by gender-based discrimination and institutional biases than others, such as women, LGBTQ+ individuals and even heterosexual men. However, socially marginalised gender groups can still wield collective power, as the feminist and LGBTQ+ movements have demonstrated. Groups that hold dominant social positions and brands mainly benefit from the normative gender structure.

Gentry and Harrison (2010) explored the role of males and fathers in advertising by conducting a content analysis of commercials. They argued that masculine roles in society are undergoing a transformation but advertising helps maintain the ‘status quo’. Their findings postulated that gender role depiction in advertisements is still not very gender neutral (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). By calling for more gender-

neutral portrayals, the authors mean less stereotypical depictions of masculinity and more egalitarian portrayals in advertising to *mirror* (Holbrook, 1987) the changing gender norms in society and *mould* (Pollay, 1986; 1987) them. It is difficult for males with a non-traditional perspective of their masculinity to find corresponding media representations due to normative masculinities, which leads to confusion and anxiety regarding what does it mean to be a man and the expectation of masculine roles in society (Gentry & Harrison, 2010), akin to what Axe has been trying to fight with their new gender-transgressive commercial.

Traditionally, gender-bending is a form of social activism to defy rigid gender roles and stereotypes, particularly where gender-non-conforming individuals find these roles oppressive. Scholarships that delve into the topic of gender-bending in advertisements—Avery (2012) and Stevens and Ostberg (2011)—provide an important perspective for this research. The work of Stevens and Ostberg (2011) on the representations of masculinity and femininity in advertising practices juxtaposes a cultural perspective with a conventional understanding of gendered representations. Stevens and Ostberg (2011) posited these differences in traditional and cultural approaches in a grid with two other dimensions of complacent (maintaining the status quo of traditional gendered representations) and subversive strategy (by challenging traditional stereotypical representations) in a spectrum. These dimensions in two oppositional axes were then sketched on a plane that generated four strategies that marketers adopt in their marketing communication: (1) *laissez-faire* (traditional/complacent), (2) critiquing institutions (traditional/subversive), (3) playful (cultural/complacent) and (4) destabilising ideologies (cultural/subversive). Gender-transgressive advertising takes a cultural approach and can be either playful or destabilising, according to their categorisation. Stevens and Ostberg (2011) discussed gender-bending and gender-blending in the context of these playful advertisements.

In a similar vein, Avery (2012) discussed gender-bending in advertising and how consumers resist such contamination of their own and their brand's identity projects. She demonstrated how transgression from normative gender roles and expectations can engender conflict and fragmentation within a brand community. Avery (2012) indicated how male consumers of Porsche employed hyper-masculine behaviour to negate the brand's effort of gender-bending, re-establishing Porsche with markers of masculinity. Avery (2012) showed how gender roles and transgressions of normative expectations can generate dissent in a brand community.

Disquisitions discussing brand gender-bending without focusing on advertising (Azar, Aimé & Ulrich, 2018; Sandhu, 2017) can also provide an important impetus for this study. Sandhu (2016) highlighted how marketers are 'redoing' gender as a result of changing gender ideologies in society that 'transcends' gender meanings of brands and incites consumers to permeate brands primarily associated with the opposing gender. She reviewed previous literature to postulate a framework to understand consumer responses to brand gender-bending and explicate how

consumer responses to brand gender-bending are influenced by social gender politics. She bifurcated the consumer responses to brand gender-bending of men and women, owing to variations in their responses.

Sandhu (2016) argued that men react to endeavours to dual-position or feminising a brand by: (1) showing signs of brand abandonment, as male consumers perceive female encroachment of their brand as contamination and lose their appeal for the brand because of androcentric societies and their hegemonic patriarchal and misogynistic views; (2) triggering their instinct to safeguard and fight for their brand through renegotiation of their masculine identity—much like Avery's (2012) study of Porsche's consumers demonstrated—by clearly demarcating boundaries and hierarchies of gender groups within the brand's user groups to reinstate their hegemonic status and engender gendered brand extensions or enable feminisation of their brands through hyper-masculine behaviours to reduce stigma or at times even rejecting the brand altogether; and (3) accepting female infringement when gendered meanings of these brand do not have a bearing on constructing their identity because of more open-mindedness pertaining to rigid gender roles, increased social acceptance of alternative gender identities, gender inclusivity, gender fluidity, or permeation of metrosexual discourses. Conversely, according to Sandhu (2016), women: (1) feel less threatened and have more endurance than men because they seek to improve egalitarianism, reduce the gender gap and have the inclination to challenge gender norms and even uplift their consumption status due to their subordinate position in the social hierarchy; but (2) are sometimes uncomfortable appropriating brands incongruous with their gender identity and impede their self-expression, and hence diminish its appeal.

Zayer et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between consumption and gender identity in popular media. They juxtaposed portrayals of masculinity and femininity in two HBO television series, *Entourage* and *Sex and the City*, and demonstrated how gender fluidity provides the characters the ammunition to be multifaceted in their performances in terms of domesticity, authenticity and sexuality. Their findings indicate that consumption enables the performance of transformative and fluid gender roles (Zayer et al., 2012). Popular media discourses can proliferate gender-transgressive practices, much like advertising.

According to Ulver (2022), today brands have transgressed from being depoliticised problem solvers to being an agent of conflict to monetise politically sensitive issues by creating socio-cultural and ideological conflicts and thereby polarisation. Furthermore, brands taking a political stance to advance and monetise on gender transgression risk alienating a large group of consumers who might become offended (Hester & Gibson, 2007) because they do not subscribe to the same ideals. There is an inherent tension that persists with these polarising ideological forces. Markets are potential sites of ideological conflicts and tensions (Jafari et al., 2015; Jafari & Goulding, 2013). These tensions enact, structure, contest and inflect the socio-cultural monolith of gender in a moral battlefield of gender

transgression and the hegemonic gender order. Importantly, some consumers, particularly immigrants, potentially find themselves navigating these contesting ideological tensions in the marketplace.

### ***Islamic Gender Ideology***

Works outside consumer research have extensively looked into religious ideologies (Miller, 2005; Pink, 2009). In marketing, there has also been an upsurge in research dealing with religious ideologies, particularly pertaining to Islam (Wilson et al., 2013; Jafari & Sandıkcı, 2015). Sandıkcı and Jafari (2013) argued that scholars in marketing have recently gained interest in exploring Islamic marketing, with an ever-increasing presence of Islam in the marketplace today. In consumer research up until recently, there have been a few instances of using ideological resources emanating from theological accounts (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012). Jafari and Süerdem (2012) argued that *Marketing Theory* (a top journal within the field) did not produce any articles related to marketing phenomena in Islamic societies. This was, however, soon remedied, as more and more consumer researchers began to delve into Islamic ideologies. The emergence of new journals, such as the *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, enabled scholars to have a critical dialogue (Jafari & Süerdem, 2012; Jafari, 2012; Sandıkcı & Jafari, 2013) on this topic.

Even in external disciplines, such as political studies, there are instances of discussions that intermingle religious ideologies with consumption (Webb, 2005). Because of consumer culture theory's stronghold in Europe and Turkey being in a unique position as a gatekeeper between Islamism and the West, a talented crop of scholars in CCT, mostly from Turkey, Iran and the UK, has recently focused on producing works with religious (Islamic) ideologies in the marketplace (Ger, 2013; Husain, Molesworth & Grigore, 2019; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; 2013; 2015; Jafari, 2012; 2022; Jafari et al., 2015; Jafari & Sandıkcı, 2016; Jafari & Süerdem, 2012; Sandıkcı, 2021; Sandıkcı & Ger, 2007; 2010; Sandıkcı & Jafari, 2013; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Among these, a corpus of scholarships has investigated (Islamic) religious ideologies in the nexus of globalisation, neo-liberal ideologies, politics and consumer culture (Sandıkcı & Jafari, 2013; Izberk-Bilgin, 2015; Ger, 2013). Few others have also worked at intersections of Islamic religious ideology, gender and consumerism (Üstüner & Holt, 2007; Yaqin, 2007) and even at the intersection of capitalism, political tensions and historical structures (Sandıkcı & Ger, 2007; 2010).

While religion has been used to understand various consumption practices, such as consumers in transition (Appau, Ozanne & Klein, 2020), socioeconomic subversions (Rauf & Prasad, 2020), religious communities (Karataş & Sandıkcı, 2013), religious exchanges (Appau, Ozanne & Klein, 2020) and spirituality (Ozanne & Appau, 2019; Rinallo & Alemany Oliver, 2019), its influence on diasporic consumer communities remains less explored. However, Appau, Ozanne and Klein (2020) looked at religious consumption by studying consumers in transitions



entangled in permanent liminality, which can be, to some extent, juxtaposed with migrant consumers.

Izberk-Bilgin (2012), singularly, depicted how religious myths, local ideological tensions, politics, globalisation and historical conflicts reproduce consumer culture in an Islamic LIC (Less Industrialised Country) as consumers perceive themselves as marginalised on a global, political and religious level as committed Muslims. Differentiating between Islam (the religion) and Islamism (reformulated indoctrination of Islam for ideological intent) and how it is not simply an ‘anti-Western’ or ‘anti-market’ ideology, she interrogated whether global brands represent ideological threats to Muslim consumers. Studying low-income Turkish consumers, Izberk-Bilgin (2012) depicted religious ideology in an Islamic consumer culture and identified three Islamist discourses of global brands—modesty, halal-haram and tyranny—to paint global brands as ‘infidels’ that repress Islamic beliefs by endangering Islamic norms and values and extirpating Islamic identity. Izberk-Bilgin (2012) further went on to explicate how these Islamic discourses are tropes for an Islamic consumer culture and ‘jihad’, indicating consumer resistance. While modesty is a trope for social inequality, halal-haram is a trope for morality and tyranny is a trope for justice, highlighting moralistic and social conflicts in the ideological battlefield. Consumers use a negotiation of diverse ideologies to contest global brands and demonstrate their marketplace resistance by revealing their own brand meanings.

Izberk-Bilgin (2012, p. 665) detached the religion Islam from the ideology of Islamism, which “involves the instrumentalization of the teachings and principles of Islam by individuals and organizations that seek social change”. Citing literature from Middle Eastern studies, she further posited that the ideology of Islamism has emerged as an appropriation of Islamic teachings to justify community and cultural resistance to globalisation, modernisation and colonisation. Referring to discourses from Islamic political studies, she went on to highlight the role of decolonisation in the proliferation of the ideology of Islamism. She maintained that as many former colonies became independent, secular and Westernised, political powers were put in charge to thrive on normalised Western institutions and values of democracy and neo-liberalism, which resulted in a lack of progress and frustration among many. This has been developed in the backdrop of politicised Islamic notions of struggle, or *jihad*, to supplant corrupt regimes (Browsers, 2013) in various countries.

While Izberk-Bilgin (2012) identified a model consisting of macro-historical factors, global consumer culture, local structures, religion, ideology and myth, all of which constantly negotiate discourses in the Turkish marketplace, her work also hinted about gender. Although she touched upon how informants challenge hegemonic gender ideologies and indications about virtues of Muslim women, signifying the sacrality of Islam, a further emphasis on how gender interacts with these intermingling ideologies, if thrown into the mix, is overlooked. Furthermore, while Turkey is a good context to explore Islamic consumer culture, it is still

situated in Europe, galvanised by secular Western ideologies, once a part of the colonising power of the Ottoman Empire and infused with *Shi'i* Islamic ideologies. A study that focuses more on the East, on an Islamic LIC, such as Bangladesh, could provide insights into a perspective more in line with *Sunni* Islamic ideologies impacted by the global consumer culture differently and with an extensive *colonial history*. There is a dearth of studies in CCT that explore gender transgression in consumer culture from an Eastern viewpoint at the intersection of gender, religion, ideology, myths and politics, which this research aims to investigate.

Explicating 'The Roots of Muslim rage', the Oriental studies historian Lewis (2001, p.19) highlighted how ideologies of Islamism can challenge Western and consumerist ideologies, contrary to what Izberk-Bilgin (2012) argued, which is exacerbating, particularly in the context of a colonial country in the East.

For a long time now there has been a rising tide of rebellion against this Western paramouncy, and a desire to reassert Muslim values and restore Muslim greatness. The Muslim has suffered successive stages of defeat. The first was his loss of domination in the world, to the advancing power of Russia and the West. The second was the undermining of his authority in his own country, through an invasion of foreign ideas and laws and ways of life and sometimes even foreign rulers or settlers, and the enfranchisement of native non-Muslim elements. The third—the last straw—was the challenge to his mastery in his own house, from emancipated women and rebellious children. It was too much to endure, and the outbreak of rage against these alien, infidel, and incomprehensible forces that had subverted his dominance, disrupted his society, and finally violated the sanctuary of his home was inevitable.

The current study investigates the discourses of Bangladeshi immigrants coming from a Muslim country where religious ideology influences the gender structure of society. Unlike Western societies, where moral and political institutions are distinguished, they are inextricably entwined in Bangladesh, as religion has long been used by political institutions to legitimise their practices (Hussain, 2010). Thus, there is also an ideological contrast in terms of religion, as Sweden is secular, whereas in Bangladesh, Islam is a major way of life that influences its culture. In the 1980s, economic and political changes contested religious ideologies on gender with an inundation of women migrating to urban areas to seek economic gratification—by getting into the labour market because of the developments in the export-oriented readymade garments industry—and become more empowered (Hines, 2018; Feldman, 2001). This relaxed religious practices such as veiling their faces and bodies (Hines, 2018). However, in recent times, there has been a re-emergence of Islamic ideologies in Bangladesh, in line with an upsurge of Islamism worldwide (Islam & Islam, 2018). According to Feldman (2001), gender inequality is pervasive through unequal power relationships and normalisation of gendered practices that stem from communal and contested understandings of Islam.

Islamism in Bangladesh is less orthodox and has elements of Sufism, Hinduism and Buddhism (O'Connell, 2001). In his study of how Bangladesh women negotiate Western secular and liberal as well as Islamist discourses through the politics of everyday life, Hussain (2010, p. 325) describes the presence of religion and Islamist ideology as an integral part of gender and political discourses in Bangladesh:

In Bangladesh as in other Muslim majority societies, Islamist forces have emphasized the importance of women adopting traditional religious practices, such as wearing “the veil”, as a cultural symbol and a weapon in the movement of Islamization against Western Modernization. On the question of modernity although some Islamic groups hold extreme attitudes of imagining it as ‘immoral’ and ‘dangerous’, there are other activists who negotiate to engage modernity by controlling its negative impacts through reinventing Islamic tradition. The discursive shift is mainly towards establishing modern civil society based, middle class led and urban organizations. In reaction to the image of commodification of the woman's body in Western modernity, they construct women wearing hijab in the public space as an image of “Modern Muslim Women”.

Contrary to Izberk-Bilgin (2012) who adopted the term *Islamism*, I used the term *Islamic* to refer to the same instrumentalised teachings and dogma of Islam by individuals and institutions, rather than the preaching of the religion Islam. The reason for using ‘Islamic’ is twofold. First, to avoid the confusion and stigma associated with ‘Islamism’ because it is increasingly used to indicate political Islamic fundamentalism (Badran, 2001; Sakai & Fauzia, 2014). Second, within CCT, most scholars have used the term ‘Islamic’ (Ger, 2013; Husain, Molesworth & Grigore, 2019; Izberk-Bilgin, 2015; Jafari, 2012; 2022; Jafari & Sandıkcı, 2016; Jafari & Sürdem, 2012; Sandıkcı, 2021; Sandıkcı & Ger, 2007; Sandıkcı & Jafari, 2013). Scholars have used the terms ‘Islamist gender ideology’ (Zuhur, 1992), ‘gender ideology of Islamism’ (Tausch & Heshmati, 2016), ‘Islamic feminism’ (Badran, 2001), ‘Islamist masculinity’, or ‘Muslim masculinity’ (Gerami, 2005) to designate the influence of Islamism in dictating the social gender order, norms, relations and roles. In this study, I used *Islamic gender ideology* to designate Islamic influences on gender ideology from a Bangladeshi perspective.

According to Hussain (2010, p. 326), “to discover the roots of the Islamist focus on gender”, the post-colonial history of Bangladesh needs to be understood first. Raju (2011) articulated this ideological conflict between the Bengali identity of ‘Bangaliana’ and Islamism in the backdrop of (post)colonialism in Bangladesh. He narrated that during the early twentieth century, when Bangladesh was a part of the Indian subcontinent, Bengali middle-class Muslims in East Bengal (Bangladesh) were agrarian and internalised Islamism as a part of their identity. The elite Muslims from the West (Pakistan), who were different in appearance (physically well-built, tall with Arab roots and speaking Urdu), looked down upon these Bengali-speaking rural Muslims. However, these Bengali Muslims had to negotiate their cultural

identity against two dominant forces: Bengali-Hindu cultural modernity and pro-Arab pan-Indian Muslim identity. These two contesting discourses of *Bengaliness* and Muslimness were tested after 1947 when the partition of the Indian subcontinent led to the separation of India from Pakistan based on religion. The Hindu-dominant parts (including West Bengal) were demarcated as India, whereas the Muslim-dominated lands, despite being 1,372 miles apart, were partitioned as West Pakistan (Pakistan today) and East Pakistan (East Bengal, which is Bangladesh today). Although the British colonial rule has long upheld the idea of divide and rule and made previous attempts to partition Bengal to wane Bengali nationalism and sow seeds of scepticism and power struggle among Hindu and Muslim Bengalis, religion became a differentiating factor for Bengal, as the partitioned marked the victory of religious identity over regional identity (Shamshad, 2017). According to Hossain (2012b), today, most Bangladeshis use their Muslim identity to differentiate themselves from Hindus in West Bengal (India).

Hossain (2012b, p. 165) argued that “since the 1940s nationalist leaders have used both Islam and Bengali ethnicity for the purposes of political mobilization—the former to mobilize Bengali Muslims during the Pakistan movement in the 1940s, the latter during the autonomy movement of the 1950s and 1960s to mobilize Hindus and Muslims alike”. According to Hussain (2010, p. 327), “the Islamic movement as observed in Bangladesh can be identified as a call for returning to original Islam, return to the Quran and Hadith. However, this movement does not call to return to Bengali origins”. This is similar to what Izberk-Bilgin (2012) observed in her study regarding how Turkish consumers envisioned and craved a return to the ‘Golden Age of Islam’.

## **Theoretical Points of Departure**

Adopting a transcultural perspective in a consumer acculturation study on gender is pivotal. Scholars have stressed the need to address the underlying inequality in broader social structures and processes that still organises gender relations to incite conversations on political issues and expand our understanding of marketing and consumer research, and specifically, the role of gender and how it can be theorised (Dobscha & Prothero, 2012; Hearn & Hein, 2015). They have called for research to understand the sustenance of various forms of male dominance that pervade society, which can be accomplished by increasing impacts of transnational change and transnationalisations. Hearn and Hein (2015, p. 1638) argued that:

In global and transnational debates and analyses of marketing and consumption, ‘culture’ still often becomes a legitimising factor in the reproduction of gendered power. Further recognition and engagement with these issues may reorientate the gender research agenda, particularly regarding the role of marketing in the reproduction of gender inequalities. In contrast, an important part of these

contemporary perspectives is the complexity of power relations and the place of and change in men and masculinities in current contexts of postcolonialisms, racialisations, neoliberalisms, technological change, transnationalisations and transnational patriarchies.

Within gender studies in consumer acculturation, Üstüner and Holt (2007) posited that ideological conflict runs deeper than what is presented in post-assimilationist consumer acculturation studies and contemporary fundamental ideological fault lines lie in religious, patriarchal and capitalist ideologies. In their study of poor Turkish women migrating from rural to urban areas, Üstüner and Holt (2007) demonstrated how the urban *Batıcı* lifestyle—representing a more idealised depiction of femininity embodying the Turkish upper-middle-class society—plays out in conflict with the “traditional patriarchal ideology of Turkish eastern villages” (p. 54). Similarly, Chytkova (2011), in her study of Romanian women migrants in Italy, also demonstrated how the construction of Western modern women myth of femininity in Italy, defined by freedom from patriarchal structures, is in direct conflict with a traditional image of women in rural patriarchal societies from Romania, which embodies women in traditional patriarchal roles such as mothers and home-makers who are subordinate and submissive to men and sacrifice themselves to serve others. Chytkova (2011) also demonstrated how pre-communist gender ethos in Romanian migrant women is influenced by patriarchal family discourse from the peasant era and religious ideologies. Outside consumer acculturation literature, in her study of Swedish single fathers navigating contesting marketplace ideologies, Molander (2021) demonstrated how patriarchal traditional ideology—that she labelled ‘intensive mothering’ in the context of parenthood—is in conflict with gender-egalitarian ideology—which she called state ideology of ‘double emancipation’—in the Swedish market. She argued that neo-liberal and global consumer culture-induced traditional patriarchal ideology is placed in opposition to the state-induced Swedish gender-egalitarian ideology. What these studies on consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies demonstrate is that patriarchal traditional ideology—emanating from neo-liberal and global consumer cultural discourses—and gender-egalitarian ideology, present in the Swedish context, are positioned in opposition to each other.

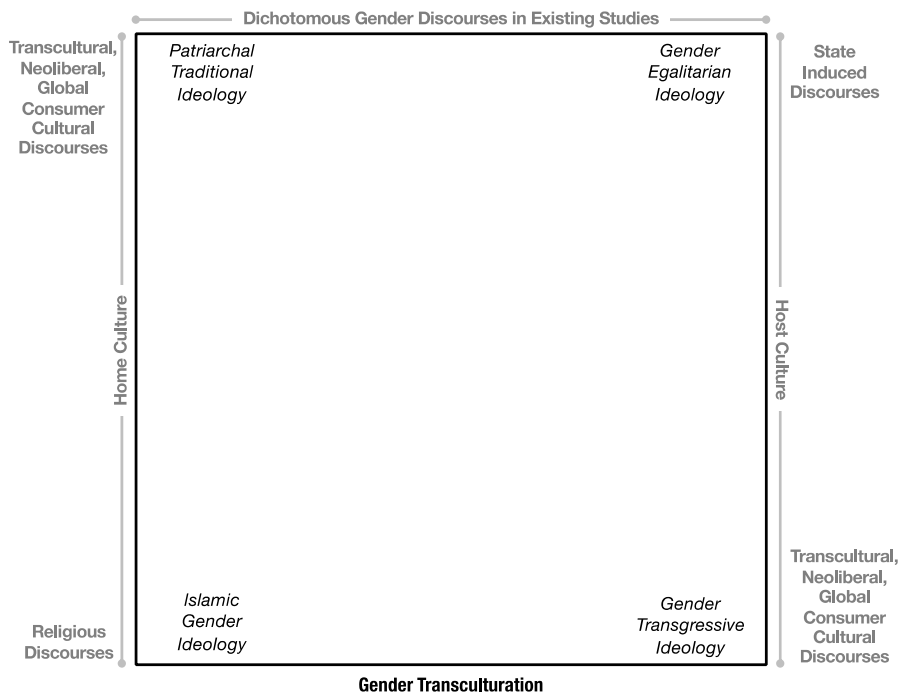
Greimas (1983) propounded the *semiotic square*, a conceptual representation depicting the rudimentary configuration of signification through oppositional analysis, by proliferating the number of analytical classes stemming from a dichotomous antithesis. Building on binary opposition, it can be used to visually depict the logical articulation of any semantic category. The elementary structure of signification is about the relationship between two categories primarily based on the distinction of opposition (Greimas & Courtés, 1982). In this model, there are two forms of binary oppositions with different logical relations that embody the semantic axes: contradictions and contrarities (Greimas & Courtés, 1982; Nöth, 1990). This model shows how two parallel operations of negation of binary

opposition can produce two contradictory terms and how the two resulting implications create relations of complementarity by concurrently determining the relation of contrariety, which is recognisable between the binary opposition (Greimas & Courtés, 1982). Östberg (2003) articulated this first generation of categorical terms:

The model takes its point of departure in these two types of oppositions: The contrariety between an assertion (e.g. life) and its negation (e.g. death), and the contradiction between an assertion and its non-assertion (e.g. life versus non-life) and negation and non-negation (e.g. death versus non-death) respectively. The signification is created through these oppositions which capture the essential structure of many semantic categories.

Loosely inspired by the semiotic square, the four ideal types of gender ideologies I used as an analytical framework are plotted in Figure 2.2. First, patriarchal traditional ideology and gender-transgressive ideology have a relation of contrariety with each other (as explicated above), which is also the case for gender-transgressive ideology and Islamic gender ideology. Second, patriarchal traditional ideology has a contradictory relationship with gender-transgressive ideology, which is also the case for Islamic gender ideology and gender-egalitarian ideology. And third, patriarchal traditional ideology has a complementary relationship with Islamic gender ideology, which is also the case for gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies with each other. These four ideal types of gender ideologies are positioned on the four different sides of the scaffolding framework in Figure 2.2.

As previously indicated, traditional patriarchal and gender-egalitarian ideologies have been predominantly used within the literature—within CCT (Chytкова, 2011; Molander, 2021; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) and outside (Barrett, 1980; Coward, 1983; Lerner, 1986; Walby, 1990)—as two forms of gender discourses. On the one hand, traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies are more influenced by the Bangladeshi home culture, whereas gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies emanate from the host culture. On the other hand, traditional patriarchal and transgressive gender ideologies are heavily informed by transcultural, neo-liberal and global consumer cultural discourses. Finally, religious discourse influences Islamic gender ideals, whereas gender egalitarianism has been promoted by the Swedish state for a long time. Using these four ideal types of ideologies, the discourses of Bangladeshi respondents were analysed to understand how they navigate these four contesting gender ideologies in Sweden. I would return to this ‘square’ framework in the penultimate chapter ‘Gender Transculturation’ and develop this as the gender transculturation model (Figure 7.1), based on the empirical analysis.



**Figure 2.2 Analytical Framework for Gender Transculturation**

Based on four ideal types of gender ideologies

The onto-epistemological orientation of the CCT discipline enables the construction of multi-layered heteroglossia that allows for a wide gamut of theorisations, consolidating structural and agentic levels of analysis (Thompson, Arnould & Giesler, 2013). Belk and Sobh (2019) highlighted the importance of employing multiple theoretical frameworks for more original theorising. Figueiredo, Gopaldas and Fischer (2017) posited three forms of theorising within CCT: emergent, enabled and enfolded. They suggested it is not always necessary to have an enabling theoretical lens using a grand theory predominant within CCT. Figueiredo, Gopaldas and Fischer (2017, p. 301) argued that:

Emergent theorizing is pretty much doing your analysis without any kind of imported theoretical construct... You're simply interpreting your data in light of your research questions and the topic-specific conversation that came before.

In this study, I took a middle ground by invoking prior literature on consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies within CCT for empirical analysis and simultaneously, borrowing the concept of transculturation to conceptualise gender transculturation. My theoretical motivation was that existing theorisation on gender acculturation did not explain what is happening in the context of navigating

conflicting ideologies. Thus, post-assimilationist consumer acculturation theory and ideal types of gender ideologies were found within previous literature, whereas the notion of transculturation was theory borrowing (Oswick, Fleming & Hanlon, 2011; Whetten, Felin & King, 2009). A post-structuralist gender lens was, however, used to understand how respondents talked about gender, thus signposting my own beliefs on gender that informed the conduct of this study, and thus are essential to understand the analysis of this research.

Nevertheless, the theoretical points of departure in this study are multifaceted and *heteroglossic*, bounded by the streams of consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies. The study borrows the concept of *transculturation* and takes a theoretical departure from a *post-assimilationist consumer acculturation theory*, viewed from a *post-structuralist gender (feminist) lens*, and analysed using *four ideal types of gender ideologies*. Post-assimilationist consumer acculturation theory was discussed in detail in the ‘consumer acculturation’ section of this chapter and also briefly at the beginning of this section. Similarly, a post-structuralist gender lens was also discussed previously. The four ideal types of gender ideologies were used to design an analytical framework to interpret the empirical materials. In the analytical framework, I identified four different important gender-ideological positions that these respondents draw upon in their everyday life. There are inherent tensions between these predefined ideologies found within the existing literature. With these pre-existing gender ideologies, I crystallised a framework for empirical analysis employed to understand how respondents’ handle these discourses and navigate these ideological tensions.

## A Heteroglossic Tapestry of Treatises

This chapter provided a brief review of previous literature and theoretical concepts relevant to this study on consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies.

Gender is the fundamental tenet of this study because it forms the core subject of this research on gender transculturation. First, I discussed the foundation of gender, as borrowed from other disciplines, to study the subject in CCT. I started with basic definitions and distinctions to understand gender and then moved on to discussions about feminism and gender transgression. This was followed by a brief overview of the intersection of gender and multiculturalism. In the next subsections, I provided a historical grounding of gender in a consumption society and subsequently reviewed rich gender literature in marketing and consumer research. I ended the section with a problematisation of gender literature in CCT.

The next section provided a brief overview of ideologies, starting with the origin of the notion from a philosophical perspective. This was followed by discussions about ideology in the CCT literature. The section subsequently demonstrated how



discourses would be used to study ideologies. Finally, I wrapped up the review with conversations about the navigation of ideological tensions within CCT and problematised CCT ideology literature, which provides an important theoretical richness to this study.

The third section looked into consumer acculturation literature within CCT that provided the fundamental scaffolding to which this study aims to primarily contribute. I started the discussion with early consumer acculturation studies within consumer research and then highlighted the post-assimilationist view highly relevant to positioning my study within this academic conversation. I also reviewed the dominated consumer acculturation model that I draw from in the upcoming analysis chapters. Moreover, I discussed current studies in consumer acculturation, followed by other recurring themes within this stream of literature. In addition to the above-mentioned literature, the section ended with a review of the literature on consumer acculturation and gender, followed by a problematisation of the consumer acculturation literature.

The last section of this chapter first highlighted that this study employed a post-structuralist gender lens and a post-assimilationist consumer acculturation theoretical perspective. The section then introduced the concept of transculturation and highlighted the suitability of the notion of transculturation over acculturation and multiculturalism. This was followed by the conceptualisation of gender transculturation that answers the research question. The section then developed the analytical framework using four ideal types of gender ideologies. The section concluded by showcasing the heteroglossic theoretical departure for this study.

# Methods

This chapter deals with the ‘how’ of this research and evaluates the methodological approach undertaken for garnering and analysing empirical materials to address the research question. First, how the research philosophy was translated to the research design is explicated. In the succeeding section, the research approach is presented unfolding how this study was undertaken, including discussions on consumer discourses, reflexivity and the sampling technique of the study. The collection and analysis of empirical materials is subsequently discussed in detail. The chapter also highlights some ethical issues that need to be considered.

According to Watson (1994), crafting a research project has four different parts. First, ‘what’ has intrigued me to pursue this project, followed by ‘why’ or the rationale of conducting this research, both explicated in the first chapter. The final part is ‘how’, which he bifurcated into (1) ‘how-conceptually’ that is concerned with seeking what models, concepts and theories can be used to answer the research question (as described in the previous chapter) and (2) ‘how-practically’ that deals with what investigative techniques are employed to apply the conceptual framework for data collection and analysis (presented in this chapter).

## Research Paradigm

According to Tadjewski (2008), our way of looking at the world is structured by our paradigmatic perspective, which Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 15) argued is a “distillation of what we think about the world (but cannot prove)”. Using two dimensions of “assumption about nature of science” (objective-subjective) and “assumption about nature of society” (regulation-radical change), Burrell and Morgan (1979, pp. 21-22) designed a paradigmatic grid delineating four paradigms—functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist and radical structuralist—which can be considered starting points for paradigms. This study took its departure from the interpretive paradigm. Our intellectual outputs are guided by certain philosophical underpinnings or paradigms. These paradigms have their own “axiology (set of values), ontology (assumptions about the nature of reality), epistemology (theory of knowledge) and view of human nature” (Tadjewski, 2014, p. 303). This section narrates my philosophical departures for this research.

## **Ontological Substratum**

I took the departure from the belief that there can be different truths, different answers to a question and multiple realities, depending on the viewpoint of the observer; hence, it is not possible to mirror reality. This is my ontological departure. Ontology depicts the basic philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality, the starting points of debate among philosophers in social science (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). I do not think that there is a single truth or objective reality ‘out there’, independent of the observer, for us to discover. I think that our diverging opinions and beliefs create complex veneers of realities, on top of that physical layer, that we subscribe to. Hence, based on my ontological belief about the research, I believe that reality is mentally perceived, subjective, and hence, socially constructed (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). In the midst of domination by the positivist tenet in social science, this idea of social constructionism was first posited by Berger and Luckmann (1966) who redefined the sociology of knowledge and argued that our reality is constructed by our everyday social interactions. According to scholars (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Heath, 1992; Hirschman, 1986; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Morgan, 1980), this approach views humans as voluntaristic and because individuals differ in their perceptions, they believe multiple realities exist, constructed by the perceiver, which can only be understood holistically.

## **Epistemological Departure**

My epistemological departure posits that we make sense by constructing subjective realities and inventing credible stories, views, narratives and versions of realities using language, personal meanings and imagination. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015, p. 51) defined epistemology as the study of “theories of knowledge” and “ways of enquiring into the physical and social worlds”, that focus on “how we know what we know”. The epistemological nature of a social constructivist paradigm is more historical and particularistic, generating time-bound and context-dependent subjective experiences or ‘idiographic knowledge’, allowing a broad-ranging ‘interpretive license’ (Heath, 1992; Hirschman, 1986; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). As an interpretivist, I believe that the complex, capricious and spontaneous nature of human behaviour, led by instinct and impulse, makes it inconceivable to extricate cause and effect or to be mapped with a statistical model (Heath, 1992; Hirschman, 1986; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Tapp, 2007). I think human beings are convoluted and multifaceted, and accordingly, studies concerning consumer acculturation and gender ideologies should reflect this labyrinthine nature. Hence, in this research, my focus is on understanding migrant consumers and their ideologies through discourses to extricate what is happening from the situation and generate ideas through induction by collecting rich data. According to Hirschman (1986), in interpretivist research—in contrast to positivism—the researcher and the

phenomenon of the study are inextricably intertwined, and research inquiry stems from the interaction between them.

Thus, the nature of this research required me to interact with the participants and involve them in guiding the research process (Heath, 1992; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), which is reflected in the selection of my method of data collection (interviews). Hence, the design of this interpretive research is emergent and continually evolving in nature, with aid from the participants (Heath, 1992; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988) because I cannot access the multiverse of constructed realities alone. Qualitative research is interpretive, experiential, situational and personalistic, and hence seeks explanation and understanding (Stake, 2010). Knowledge inquiry overall is intrinsically ‘value-laden’ because my indoctrination and values have a large bearing on the choice of phenomenon, methods, data and findings (Hirschman, 1986). Hence, while conducting the study, I was careful not to impose my perspective, while simultaneously relying on my beliefs, insights and intuitions to access these realities of others, which bolstered my priori conceptualisation of the phenomenon.

## **Research Design Formulation**

The interpretivist approach of knowledge inquiry I used as a springboard to view the world coincides with my research design. “A research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 40). To evaluate the research design of this project, two questions are necessary: (1) is this design an appropriate and functional one, given the research question being asked, and does it provide me necessary materials? (2) is it realistic and doable given the circumstances at hand in terms of resources, time, money and competence?

To understand how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies in the marketplace, it is essential to understand their discursive reflections. At the micro level, it can be observed how ideologies are enacted in the social practices and interactions of social actors in everyday life. One fundamental form of such everyday interaction is discourse through text and dialogical conversation (van Dijk, 2012). Thus, the best way to understand consumer discourses—their experiences, rich life history, beliefs, views and perspectives—is to interview them. Interview data shows discourses, which are shaped within the ideological framework. Respondents take ideological positions through these discourses as a reflection through talk (subsequently converted into text). This shows what people present that they like to do, which is the best way for analysis of underlying ideologies to understand their views and beliefs on gender relations. These discourses communicate the opinions, perspectives, positions and interests of respondents (van Dijk, 1995). I conducted in-depth interviews—that McCracken (1988) characterised as long interviews—to access consumer discourses. Holt (1997) labelled such interviews as ethnographic interviews or post-structuralist lifestyle analyses to

understand nuanced cultural patterns for analysing consumer lifestyles from specific preferences and actions. Empirical materials, in the form of consumer discourses, were analysed and interpreted in a hermeneutically grounded way, using the hermeneutic framework for interpreting consumer stories as posited by Thompson (1997) to extricate insights from interviews. Hence, there was incessant oscillation during the analysis and abstraction of themes from data. Data analysis was also conducted using analytical techniques from Spiggle (1994) and Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018).

## Research Approach

### Studying Consumer Discourses

In the analysis of this study, I attempted to understand how respondents reflect upon ideologies. I looked at discourses in language and found manifestations of ideologies in discourses. I tried to understand how these respondents draw upon discourses, which are the embodiment of higher-order ideologies, to navigate tensions. While ideological tensions are higher-order and abstract, the discursive drawing and jumping back and forth are findable in the data. More specifically, this is where the macro and micro meet, as explicated previously in the ‘Ideologies’ section of the previous chapter how macro-level ideologies can be understood through micro-level talks using discourses. These participants draw from and navigate between different discursive positions, steeped in particular ideological positions. Discourses are what we see, whereas ideologies are embodied within those discourses. Respondents navigate by drawing on gender discourses, which are in themselves manifested as ideologies. Rose (2016, p. 187) highlighted that:

The notion of discourse is central to both Foucault’s theoretical arguments and to his methodology. ...It refers to groups of statements that structure the way a thing is thought, and the way we act on the basis of that thinking. In other words, discourse is a particular knowledge about the world which shapes how the world is understood and how things are done in it.

Hence, this is directly related to ideologies, which are “those representations that reflect the interests of power” (Rose, 2016, p. 107). Studying discourses can help understand the structures and roles of underlying ideologies (van Dijk, 2006). Ideologies are typically acquired, communicated and reproduced through discourses, which are verbal or written communicative interactions (van Dijk, 1995; 2006). Because people—such as migrant consumers—enact, manifest, reproduce and disseminate ideologies primarily through text and talk, the best way to study ideologies is by understanding discourses (van Dijk, 2006). “The analysis of

ideology is, in a fundamental respect, the study of language in the social world, since it is primarily within language that meaning is mobilized in the interests of particular individuals and group” (Thompson, 1984, p. 73). Ideologies are manifested by talks and texts, and hence, an analysis of respondents’ talks is the most appropriate to understand respondents’ underlying ideologies. In this research, I studied consumers’ talks by interviewing them to understand the gender discourses they draw from. This exploration of how informants draw upon discourses is in line with how discourses are used within CCT (cf. Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Thompson, 2004). These studies have used in-depth interviews with consumers and employed an iterative hermeneutic analysis to understand how ideological meanings are enacted and contested.

Studying consumer discourses enabled me to understand how texts formulate particular perspectives and accounts of the social world and how these accounts are constructed as veridical or natural through specific ‘regimes of truth’ (Rose, 2016). To address the complexities and conflicts that define discourses (Rose, 2016), Potter (1996) suggested using interpretive repertoires, which are sets of methodically interrelated terms used with elegance and grammatical consistency and arranged to surround a central metaphor. These historically developed interpretive repertoires form a significant part of the ‘common sense’ of an interpretive community’s culture (Potter, 1996). The interpretive repertoire is a set of perspectives, concepts and themes that a researcher masters, including their theories, paradigmatic assumptions, vocabularies and all knowledge (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011; Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009). My interpretive repertoire forms my pre-understanding that would frame the interplay between the empirical materials and my interpretation but can also curtail the likelihood of making certain interpretations. Having said that, it is essential to understand the specific social circumstances in which the discourse is situated (Rose, 2016). This research is, thus, a socio-cultural reading of talks.

The ideological polarisation between ingroups and outgroups is a crucial attribute of ideological structures, which can be comprehensively and rigorously studied through text and talk by looking at how ingroups—or migrant consumers in this case—view their own good and bad practices in comparison to the outgroup (van Dijk, 2006). To understand how discourses code underlying ideologies, based on van Dijk (2006), certain discourse structures were used organised by forms, meanings and actions: global and local meanings, lexicon, syntax, sound structures, formats, rhetorical structures and interactional structures (see Table 3.1 in Appendix B). van Dijk (1995) argued that members of a social group embody the relationship between themselves and Others in the form of ‘us versus them’, where they tend to present their own group in good lights and the Others with bad properties. Thus, based on Van Dijk’s principles, ideologies were abstracted based on how respondents (de)emphasised the positives and negatives about ‘us’ and ‘them’ based on certain views and practices in their expressions during the interview.

## A Reflexive Account

Reflexive research comprises careful interpretation of the object/phenomenon out there and reflection concerning the subject/researcher (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009). Reflexivity involves being aware that the subject and object of the study, mutually and continually, co-create and impact each other (Gabriel, 2015; Symon & Cassell, 2012). It is vital to cultivate reflexivity in this research by challenging and opening new possibilities. The point of reflexivity is not to become constrained by any fixed tradition but to keep our distance and break away from our frame of reference and thoughts and to be aware that there are alternative ways to see and challenge oneself. Jafari (2022, p. 222) called for doctoral students

to study their own society (also that of the society they aim to investigate in their research) profoundly and with a great amount of self-reflexivity...[to] develop a higher-level emic understanding of the institutional (international and domestic) power relations that have shaped the institutional underpinnings of the knowledge they believe they possess about self and other. ...Such self-reflexivity is particularly vital in situations wherein non-Western doctoral students work with Western supervisors whose contextual knowledge largely depends on their students. It is, therefore, important that these students strengthen their emic analyses of their context and avoid partial (re)presentations of their social realities. Delving into the social science repositories of their own society can also help possibly explore the theoretical insights that have remained less visible but can shed light on their studies.

Thus, in this investigation of my own societies and socio-cultural contexts—I studied individuals who, similar to me, migrated from Bangladesh to Sweden—I strived to engage in self-reflexivity. Being reflexive is about constantly questioning assumptions and consequences of my own stance through empirical material, analysis and theorising (Gabriel, 2015; 2018). Being human furnishes me with conscious reflexivity, which is about questioning assumptions and the consequences of my own work (Gabriel, 2015). Growing up, I have been exposed to an eclectic range of nuanced ideological, socio-cultural and political worldviews. I grew up in an urban part of a developing country, worked in a rural part, now living in a Nordic egalitarian country and have always been subsumed in Western media, entertainment and discourses. These multitudes of contradictions situate me in a unique position to contemplate multiple perspectives, make multifaceted interpretations and categorically reflect on multitudinous levels. I cannot separate my own values, experiences and motives from the research process (Gabriel, 2018). Hence, in an attempt to engage in reflexivity, I have taken into account that my own perspectives, gender, background, preference, competence, identity, affiliations and personality have influenced my work (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2017). This enabled me to observe, frame and interpret this social phenomenon with fresh perspectives, preventing me from viewing things as a rational occurrence and going beyond my ‘cultural ethnocentrism’ and ‘parochialism’ (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). Using insights into my own cultural background—and as a Bangladeshi migrant in

Sweden—I have a unique position to investigate and document the consumer acculturation experiences of other Bangladeshi immigrants in Sweden. This can bring cultural relativity to the discussion to understand what issues are raised among the informants.

I chronicled this narrative as an outsider, being an immigrant in Sweden from Bangladesh, and from an insider perspective, being exposed to the Swedish marketplace. However, I should also admit that I have not been completely immersed in Swedish society, as a relatively new migrant myself. Moreover, being a Bangladeshi, my lens also affected the informants in the interviews and in regard to the interpretations I made. The fact that I am an affluent and privileged male Bangladeshi interviewing about gender ideologies and acculturation in Sweden also influenced how my respondents viewed me and consequently, their accounts. Me being a Bangladeshi enabled them to be more honest and richer in their accounts. Nevertheless, sometimes, they might have engaged in self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) to uphold a sophisticated image with a veneer of ‘coolness’ in front of a fellow Bangladeshi, in the chance that they meet me later. For instance, some were at times very cautious in expressing politically incorrect thoughts until I encouraged them by explaining about anonymity and that I am not looking for a certain answer but truly want to understand what they think. However, I cannot conclude that what I found here is mostly not self-presentation to come across as a good Bangladeshi or a cosmopolitan.

Furthermore, many participants’ views indicate that they refrained from appearing as a neo-liberal subject. However, I also attempted to demonstrate such an appearance of normative conformity later in the findings. Additionally, sometimes, I asked people similar questions at different points in time to dig deep and understand what they meant and penetrate that veneer of self-presentation. At times, I also tried to provide certain contextual examples or provided my own views or connected with their context in order for them to be more comfortable and forthcoming. Hence, they demonstrated a certain level of comfort as I could relate to their thoughts, contexts and understandings (for example, when they said something that might not be understood in a Swedish context, some of them asked ‘you know right?’). Thus, they felt I understood where they come from, which also helped me go in-depth and analyse their views in their narratives culture-historically.

For researchers, it is important to employ disciplined imagination to engender more heterogeneity in research. Such disciplined imagination can stem from *tales from the field* – stories “about the actual doing of the research, the troubles of getting access, the triumphs and reversals of finding good data, unusual and eccentric respondents, trench romances, and so forth” (Gabriel, 2013, p. 110). To be able to do story work, stitch tales from experiences, and go beyond proto-stories, I needed to look beyond empirical materials and not dismiss the ‘trifles’ of the empirical setting (Gabriel, 1991; 2013). Hence, it was vital to be less rigid and formal in



applying methodologies to unencumber myself. Practically speaking, conducting good qualitative research required me to ask questions, hang around and read texts.

Finally, it should be noted that discourse can often be ideologically ambiguous—for instance, respondents might not necessarily relay or enact the beliefs of the groups they identify with—and thus, a study of consumer discourses might not enable interpretation of people's ideological beliefs (van Dijk, 2006). This should be kept in mind when perusing the findings of this study.

## **Sampling Technique**

According to Statista (2021), a total of 12,965 immigrants from Bangladesh legally live in Sweden. Bangladeshi immigrants with lower-level of education traditionally migrate to European countries primarily because of labour markets (Jackson, Jonsson & Rudolphi, 2012). After the Second World War, many immigrants from South Asian countries such as Bangladesh arrived in Nordic countries. Interestingly, for Bangladeshis, Sweden was the most popular choice for migration compared to other Nordic countries (Larsson & Björkman, 2010). Thus, understanding the discourses of South Asian immigrants from Bangladesh in Sweden enabled me to access migrant consumers' views and beliefs.

The study is composed of empirical materials from semi-structured interviews with twenty-five immigrant consumers from Bangladesh living in Sweden (see Table 3.2). Informants were selected based on their age (26-35 years), class (broad middle-class), having grown up in Muslim families in Bangladesh and their time in Sweden (1-10 years). Being a Muslim migrant of Bangladeshi descent in Sweden, I conducted all the interviews in Bangla, occasionally mixed with English, at informants' homes, either face-to-face or digitally. Respondents were initially solicited based on my diasporic network, and subsequently, these participants helped me find more informants. Thus, I employed snowball sampling (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015) to access interviewees for this study. Although such sampling techniques are reductive in nature, it was appropriate for this study because this was the best way to gain access to Bangladeshi migrants in Sweden. Respondents' motivation for migration varied between work and studies.

While the respondents were diverse in the sense that they came from different backgrounds and socio-economic conditions, they were also homogenous in terms of their high education level and comfortable socio-economic position in Sweden. Thus, they have a certain way of navigating and contesting gender ideologies. Globally, there is a large group of migrants that falls in this category and hence, this research advances our understanding of this particular group and their acculturation process.

# Collection of Empirical Materials

## In-depth Interviews

In this study, the method of empirical material collection involved conducting in-depth interviews—that McCracken (1988) referred to as ‘long interviews’ and Holt (1997) termed as ‘ethnographic interviews’—which were in a conversational style, while hanging out a bit longer in their habitat (where possible, in face-to-face interviews) to capture their context. I spent a considerable amount of time during the interview to understand in-depth the background of the respondents. Although it was more challenging to gain that contextual understanding in certain cases, as I had to conduct some digital interviews due to restrictions posed by the COVID-19 outbreak.

Interviews are “specific sites for data construction in a complex interaction between interviewer and interviewee” (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2017, p. 494). Alvesson (2011) argued that interviews are not inroads into the truth about the reality of the interviewee/phenomenon but are heavily dependent on their interpretation by the researcher. He offered eight metaphors to challenge incumbent assumptions and develop alternative understandings that emphasise the interview as a complex situation, of which I can use ‘establishing and perpetuating a storyline’, ‘identity work’, ‘moral storytelling’ and ‘political action’. Ethnographic interviewing is a very powerful tool for investigating consumers, as informal conversations in a respondent’s natural habitat emulate their everyday situations in which they converse freely and authentically (Holt, 1997). The objective was to garner rich and detailed materials to better distinguish between operational and presentation data (Charmaz, 2014; Maanen, 1979; McCracken, 1988). Thus, in-depth interviews can be used to culturally contextualise the materials obtained.

Interviews were conducted amongst young urban middle-class Bangladeshi migrant consumers in Sweden to probe and glean how they navigate conflicting gender ideologies in Sweden. I wanted to be cognizant of their understanding of their own acculturation experiences and how they draw from various discursive resources, from their home, host and global consumer culture, to understand their consumption and marketing communication they encounter in Sweden. I attempted to articulate their untapped emotions and internal conflicts regarding this phenomenon. It was pivotal to understand their culture-historically and ideologically negotiated meanings of consumer acculturation informed by various gender ideologies to delve into their beliefs and views in the host culture.

Interviews are an active and emergent process; they are, thus, not merely neutral tools to collect data but active interactions between people that generate negotiated and contextually based data to be understood as an institutionalised practice of knowledge generation (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Svensson & Alvesson, 2007). I took

a romanticist stance towards interviews primarily based upon establishing rapport, trust and commitment between myself and the respondents to explore their inner world (Alvesson, 2011; Svensson & Alvesson, 2007). Hence, it was also “flexible, context-sensitive, and dependent on the personal interaction of the interviewer and interviewee” (Kvale, 1992, p. 159). Ethnographic interviewing cannot abide by a strictly scripted dialogue, rather the conversation is steered by the interviewee (Holt, 1997). However, a general guideline is necessary, and using semi-structured interview guides is commonplace in ethnographic interviews (Belk, 2007; Holt, 1997). Interviews, therefore, were semi-structured, with a general set of themes I wanted respondents to talk about, which I continually revised (Belk, 2007; Holt, 1997; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018) as more interviews were conducted.

Over the last five years, the objective of this research had undergone significant changes. Among the various iterations, there were some predominant ones. Initially, this study attempted to understand consumer meanings of gender-transgressive advertising among consumers in Sweden and Bangladesh. The next major iteration of this study involved understanding how gender-transgressive ideologies manifest and unfold in the Swedish marketplace. The last predominant version attempted to understand consumer acculturation and consumer resistance pertaining to gender-transgressive ideologies among immigrant and indigene consumers in Sweden. My respondents and interview structures continually changed as this study went through major changes. This was a process where the topics of interest changed over time, as they do in interpretive and socio-cultural studies.

Even after finalising the research question of this study—understanding how migrant consumers from Bangladesh navigate contesting gender ideologies to make sense of their acculturation experience using marketplace resources and communication in Sweden—interview structures and questions were revised as more interviews were conducted. For instance, in my early interview structure, after understanding respondents’ backgrounds, I would attempt to understand the impact of gender in their everyday lives and then move on to showing them advertisements, starting with print advertisements and gradually moving to two multimedia advertisements. However, later I added questions to better understand their gender perspectives and what gender means to them. I also tweaked the presentation and discussions of advertisements, such as starting with the multimedia ones followed by the print ads, because I felt discussions of gender discourses would be more streamlined if we discussed issues pertaining to male-female, followed by the introduction of the non-binary genders. It turned out that the flow of discussion was smoother when multimedia was shown first. I also started taking more detailed field notes to accompany the interviews. See Appendix C for the interview guidelines to understand the general directions of themes that were discussed with the respondents. Being reflexive, I attempted to use my judgement and augment interviewees’ communication by motivating them to exploit their knowledge. There were many instances when the respondent would bring up something that I found

interesting. Thus, I would continue to probe into that, digging deeper and deviating from my scripted directions.

Consumer research scholars have long used interviews to understand experiential themes in consumption (Hirschman & Holbrook, 1992; Stern, Thompson & Arnould, 1998; Thompson, Locander & Pollio, 1989). Interviews necessitate garnering consumer-driven accounts that prioritise respondent accounts by stimulating them to provide contextual descriptions of their life histories to understand their lived meaning (Stern, Thompson & Arnould, 1998). Hence, I spent the first half an hour to forty-five minutes understanding their life histories. This was followed by a more detailed understanding of their lifestyle and consumption. Within previous consumer acculturation studies of gender, Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004, p. 226) used “cultural objects and things to examine consumption and the role of material goods in negotiating the border crossings amongst adult South Asian women in Britain”. Thus, similarly, I talked to the respondents about “clothing and dress code; food; leisure; media and music” (Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004, p. 226). Then, I asked a series of questions regarding their migration experiences moving from Bangladesh to Sweden. Afterwards, I used several gender-transgressive advertisements as prompts to understand their interpretations behind advertisements and their ideological orientation pertaining to gender transgression. This was followed by a conversation around the meanings of gender to the respondent and gendered consumption. Once again, I streamlined my flow and switched a bit here. In early interviews, I used the prompts in the end. However, informants often struggled to talk about gender transgression without proper reference points, which necessitated me to introduce prompts earlier in the interview.

Fontana and Frey (2000) accentuated several things that helped me plan the interviews, such as accessing the setting, understanding the language and culture of the respondents, presenting oneself, gaining trust and establishing rapport. Potter and Hepburn (2012) addressed eight potential interview challenges that researchers encounter during reporting of the interview and analysis, which helped me structure the interviews in a better way. They also compiled basic transcription conventions that were useful for transcribing interview data. Interviewers were found through acquaintances of the researchers’ network. The interviewer profile is shown below in Table 3.2. It was easier for me to access and understand Bangladeshi consumers because I am well-versed in their language, cultural vernaculars and realities, as I spent a major part of my life there. Informants mostly spoke either in Bangla or a blend of English and Bangla. Interviews were conducted between July 2019 and April 2022, lasted from two to three and a half hours and were supplemented with field notes. Approximately 670 pages of transcribed text were generated from these interviews and over 30 pages of field notes.

## A Cartography of Respondents

A total of twenty-five respondents<sup>16</sup> were interviewed. Table 3.2 provides an overview of the informants in this study. The rest of this section provides a more in-depth contextual background of respondents, whose interview quotes were used to illustrate the findings of this study in the next three analysis chapters<sup>17</sup>. Many consumer acculturation researchers—such as Chytкова (2011)—have used respondents’ life histories to contextualise quotes from their interviews. This contextualisation of respondents provides information necessary to understand the respondents in situ and their motivations. This section can be used as a map for navigation when looking at interview excerpts from these respondents in the subsequent chapters.

**Table 3.2 Informant Profiles**

Interviews with Immigrant Respondents Living in Sweden

<b>Name (Pseudo- nymised)</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Household</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Time in Sweden</b>
Faisal	M	34	Marketing	Divorced	Stockholm	1 year
Nabil	M	32	Sales	Married, lives with wife	Stockholm	1 year
Asif	M	32	Finance	Single	Stockholm	1 year
Sadia	F	32	Marketing Communication Professional in a Healthcare company	Married, 1 child, lives with husband	Malmö	4 years
Mehedi	M	29	Part-time work and student	Married, Separated	Lund	2 years
Sumaiya	F	30	Housewife	Married, lives with husband	Malmö	5 years
Kaniz	F	35	Teacher	Married, lives with husband and two children	Malmö	6 years

<sup>16</sup> Throughout this book, I use ‘respondents’, ‘participants’ and ‘informants’ to refer to the interviewees of the study.

<sup>17</sup> There were many similarities among quotes from various participants, and thus, quotes from only certain individuals were used in the analysis. Hence, excerpts from various participants were not included in the analysis chapters, because either they evoked similar depictions or I found them less interesting and relevant to the analytical themes. On the one hand, excerpts some respondents during early stages of data collection were less relevant to the current analytical themes because the focus of this study and the research question underwent change over time. On the other hand, quotes from participants in the final stages of data collection only elicited repetitions. Hence, some informants were more recurring in their empirical analysis, whereas some were left out completely. Nevertheless, the analysis employed the discourses of all participants, even if their quotes were not used to illustrate the findings.

Mizan	M	35	Student	Married, lives alone, wife and child live in Bangladesh	Lund	1.5 years
Nusrat	F	33	Government Office	Single	Malmö	7 years
Faria	F	31	People Management	Married, lives with husband	Stockholm	4 years
Shakib	M	29	Electrical Engineer	Married, lives with wife	Malmö	4 years
Mahfuz	M	30	Part-time photographer and student	Lives with girlfriend	Göteborg	6 years
Zaman	M	32	Project Manager in a IT Startup	Single	Stockholm	6 years
Mehzabin	F	29	Business Analyst/Consultant in Accounting	Married to a Swede	Umeå/ Stockholm	6 years
Khaled	M	27	In between jobs (Biology and Environmental Science)	Married, lives with wife	Umeå	4 years
Samir	M	28	Healthcare Business Development Manager	Married, lives with wife	Hässelby	4 years
Fahim	M	28	R&D Engineer in a software company	Single, lives with girlfriend	Malmö	11 years
Sarah	F	33	Housewife	Married to a Swede, 1 child	Stockholm	2 years
Anika	F	31	Manager in a Retail company	Married, lives with husband	Malmö	4.5 years
Hasan	M	32	Sales and Marketing	Married, lives with wife	Malmö	5 years
Habib	M	33	PhD in Molecular Biology	Single, lives alone	Umeå	6 years
Rakib	M	35	Business Creation Manager	Married, lives with wife and 1 child	Göteborg	7 years
Zahid	M	32	Food Delivery	Single, lives alone	Malmö	4 years
Mira	F	25	Student and part-time job	Single, lives alone	Stockholm	6 years
Said	M	33	Program Manager	Married, lives with wife	Stockholm	5 years

Shakib (29) is a hardware electrical engineer, who moved four years ago to Lund to study, and now lives in Malmö, commuting to Lund for work. He grew up in a rural area in Bangladesh, dominated by even more patriarchal gendered structures than in the urban areas. He later moved to urban Dhaka, before immigrating to Sweden. His childhood was outdoorsy, involving playing in fields and swimming. He has two brothers and one sister living in Bangladesh. He talks to his parents almost every

day. He initially moved alone, but later his wife—who was a doctor in Bangladesh—also moved to him.

Samir (28) is a pharmacist, living in Hässelby and working in the healthcare sector. He initially moved to Stockholm for his master's and has been in Sweden for four years. He is married and lives with his wife, who also moved to Sweden for her studies later. Samir spent his early childhood years in the Middle East—at the age of one, he moved to and grew up in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia—with his family because his father's business was there. He studied in a Bangladeshi school there. During his adolescence, he moved back to Bangladesh. He completed his bachelor's in pharmaceutical sciences from a private university in Bangladesh, followed by a master's in pharmacology. Afterwards, he worked for a couple of years in Dhaka and lived there until he left for Sweden. He moved to Sweden inspired by his uncle, who completed his PhD in Sweden.

Faria (31) moved to Sweden four years back to study in Umeå and then subsequently moved to Stockholm to work, where she now lives with her husband, who has lived in Sweden for eleven years. She was born in a suburban town in Southern Bangladesh and travelled a lot during her childhood owing to her parents' work. They moved to Dhaka during her early teen years. She grew up in a middle-class family in Dhaka—the urban capital of Bangladesh—with a younger sister and both parents working, and her mother being more successful in terms of a career than her father. As a young girl, she used to play in the streets and fields. During her childhood, she lived in a blended family with a big family including her aunts and uncles. Currently, she works in a recruitment consultant agency.

Fahim (28) is an R&D engineer in a software company. He was born and grew up in a middle-class area in Dhaka, Bangladesh. His family in Bangladesh comprises his parents—his father is a businessman, whereas his mother is a homemaker—and a younger sister, all of whom live in Bangladesh. He completed his high school in Bangladesh and then moved to Sweden for his higher education, including graduation and postgrad. He has been living in Sweden for the last eleven years. He is in a live-in relationship with his girlfriend, and they live together in Malmö. His girlfriend was born and brought up in Stockholm, although her parents are—and migrated from—Bangladesh.

Sarah (34) is a homemaker, living in Stockholm. She grew up in two different places within urban Dhaka. In the first neighbourhood, she and her younger sister experienced a lot of freedom, participating in outdoor sports with other girls, but subsequently, as she moved to a more upper-class neighbourhood, her outdoorsy experiences were limited. After her graduation, she worked for six years in different parts of Bangladesh. She met a Swede on social media, got married to him and afterwards moved to Sweden. Now she has been here for around two years and spends her time looking after her daughter.

Mehzabin (29) is a Swedish citizen who has lived in Sweden for six years and works as an accounting consultant. She was born in a rural area in Bangladesh and moved to another rural area because of her father's work until she moved to the urban capital. She completed her bachelor's from a public university in Dhaka and after her graduation, she worked for one and a half years and moved to Umeå for her master's. During her master's, she met her then-boyfriend, now husband. A couple of years later, she started working and now she lives in Stockholm with her husband.

Anika (31) has lived in Sweden for four and a half years, moving for studies, with her husband, and is now working. She grew up in an upper-middle-class family in Dhaka, with a mother who was more successful in her career than her father. She studied in an English-medium school (Jahan & Hamid, 2022) in Dhaka and after completing her A-level, she completed her graduation from a private university in Dhaka. She worked for several years before receiving a scholarship for her master's and moved to Sweden. Currently, she works as a mid-level manager in a retail company.

Hasan (32) has lived and worked in Sweden for the last five years. He grew up in Dhaka in a middle-class family with his father working and mother taking care of their household. He studied in an English-medium education system and completed his bachelor's from a private university in Dhaka. He worked in Bangladesh for several years before moving to Sweden for his master's with a scholarship. He works in sales and marketing and lives with his wife in Malmö.

Khaled (27), living in Umeå, has been in Sweden for four years. He grew up in a small suburban town in Southwest Bangladesh in a family of six, with one elder brother—who is an entrepreneur—and two younger siblings who are students. His father worked as a top executive in an NGO, whereas his mother was a housewife. He has had a relationship with nature since his childhood. Upon completing a bachelor's in fisheries biology from a suburban area in Bangladesh, he received scholarships from universities in three different countries and opted to move to Sweden for higher education in fisheries, wildlife management and environmental science from an agricultural university. After completing his master's, he has been working in Swedish government agencies with forests and fisheries to protect biological and ecological balance. In Sweden, he stayed in student hostels for the first two and a half years. Since his wife—who was a doctor back in Bangladesh and now studying medicine in Sweden—moved to Sweden, they have lived in an apartment.

Zaman (32) has been living in Sweden for six years. His parents live in a small town in Bangladesh. He has three siblings, one elder brother, one elder sister—both of whom work now—and a younger brother. He grew up in a rural town in Northern Bangladesh and moved to the capital Dhaka after completing tenth grade. Then he moved to a Southern town in Bangladesh for his bachelor's. He did his bachelor's in electronics and communication engineering from a public university in



Bangladesh. He worked for four years in several companies, mostly in embedded systems, a field in electronics, before moving to Umeå with a scholarship for a master's in computing science. He moved to Sweden owing to a fully funded scholarship as well as good robotics master programmes in Sweden. After his master's, he has been working as a project manager in an IT start-up in Stockholm. He is single and lives in a room within an apartment he shares with a small Bangladeshi family.

Mahfuz (30) is a freelance writer and part-time photographer and studies economics full-time at a Swedish university. He has lived in Sweden for six years. In Bangladesh, he has a younger sister who lives with his parents. He grew up in a middle-class family with both parents working. When he was younger, his family lived in a joint family with several other close family members until his parents decided to move to a separate house. Currently, he lives with his European girlfriend in Gothenburg.

Mizan (35) is a student in sociology, anthropology and development studies, living in a multicultural area in Lund. He misses his family—which comprises his wife, two children, parents and a younger brother—because they live in Bangladesh. Mizan was born and grew up in a village in Northern Bangladesh. His father was a farmer, and during his childhood, he often helped his father in the field. To attain a good education, he went to school quite far from his home and his father bought him a cycle to travel. For entertainment, he had to visit two households in his village that had television. However, because they were powered by batteries, he missed out on watching advertisements. He remembers his school days as fun, but also with stories about getting beaten by teachers. After high school, he moved to Dhaka to study at a public university. Before moving to Sweden, he worked as an assistant professor for six years at a private university in Dhaka.

Mehedi (29) is a development studies student and part-time worker living in Lund for two years. He lives with his wife but is in the process of separation. In Bangladesh, his family comprises his parents and a younger sister. He was born in a small town in Southern Bangladesh. His father worked in the Bangladesh armed forces, and hence, his family lived in the cantonment areas and moved from one place to another throughout his childhood. He studied at a public university in Dhaka—and was exposed to co-ed education for the first time—and worked as a market researcher for several years before moving to Sweden for his postgraduate studies.

Faisal (34) is a marketing professional, who lives in Stockholm. He is divorced and lives alone. In Bangladesh, he grew up in a suburban town with his younger sister and both his parents working. His mother worked as a schoolteacher and his father worked as a banker. Interestingly, his mother's work required her to move as she worked in a girl's cadet college. Hence, his father always found a job in the same location, prioritising her work instead of his own career. He moved to Dhaka after

high school and studied at an expensive private university. He developed a successful career in Bangladesh to move to Sweden for work.

Nabil (32) works in sales in Stockholm. He is married and lives with his wife. In Bangladesh, he grew up in a posh area within urban Dhaka. He has a younger brother, and they attended an English-medium school together. His mother was a homemaker, whereas his father worked. He studied at a private university, but his career was stagnant in Bangladesh. He moved between different companies and then took a break from work and moved to Sweden.

Asif (32) works in Stockholm in finance. He is single and lives alone. His family in Bangladesh comprise his mother, as his father passed away during his high school. After receiving an English-medium education and studying at a private university, he started working in a private bank in Bangladesh. He moved in aspiration of higher education and decided to settle in Sweden after he received a lucrative offer from a top finance company in Sweden.

Mira (25) is a bachelor student studying in Stockholm and engaging in part-time work at times for some extra pocket money. Her education is financed by her parents who live in Bangladesh. Her father works, whereas her mother is a homemaker. Her sister studies at another university in Europe, which paved way for her to move to Sweden, despite being very young. She is currently dating a non-Bangladeshi in Sweden. She moved to Sweden after completing high school in Bangladesh.

## **Gender-Transgressive Advertisements as Prompts**

It was often difficult to explain gender transgression to the respondents. To provide them with a reference point and facilitate conversation about contesting gender ideologies, specifically gender-transgressive ideology, several gender-transgressive advertisements from major brands were used as prompts to elicit their responses. This also helped garner respondents' thoughts and views about marketplace communication, which is one of the marketplace resources that can get through to them as they acculturate in their host culture. During the interview, I used various advertisements as prompts that were: (1) *agender*, highlighting the abolishment of gender by promoting genderless offerings such as androgynous; (2) *gender-neutral*, promoting the same or similar market offerings for every gender, such as unisex; (3) *gender-fluid*, deploying elements of gender non-binary and transgender identities to promote acceptance of a wide range of gender identities; (4) *gender-bending*, using gender in a playful way to challenge traditional gender norms and break boundaries, such as marketing gendered products to the opposite gender; (5)

*femvertising* (Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlen, 2017)<sup>18</sup>, challenging traditional female advertising stereotypes; (6) *manclusive*, challenging the narrative of toxic masculinity with messages of inclusion and promoting an aesthetic of alternative masculinity; and (7) *homonormative*, such as advertising with LGBTQ+ motifs. All these advertisements, that were used as prompts, have challenged the hegemonic gender norms and stereotypes and communicated diversity and inclusivity-themed messages.

As manifestations of gender transgression in the consumer culture, advertising plays a role as a device, giving ideology a physical form that influences consumers in society. Marxists have long argued that mass media, specifically television, helps proliferate a 'false consciousness' of consumption ideology (Hirschman, 1988; Gramsci, 1971). "According to hegemony theory, the media industries are only one of several institutions that dominate class-specific perceptions of reality" (Gottdiener, 1985, p. 981). Television, specifically, has a predominant influence on local cultures, particularly subaltern consumers (Varman & Belk, 2008), such as gender non-binary or transgender individuals. Through mass media, advertising helps diffuse meanings and images of Western fashion patterns, which serve as the foundation of the ideology of consumption that animates North American and Western European societies (Appadurai, 1996; Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Schroeder and Zwick (2004) contended that:

As an engine of consumption, advertising plays a strong role in promulgating dualistic gender roles and prescribing sexual identities. Most ad campaigns invoke gender identity, drawing their imagery primarily from the stereotyped iconography of masculinity and femininity. In this way, masculinity and femininity interact smoothly with the logic of the market-advertising representations and consumption practices provide a meaningful system of difference, which has established strong limits to the possibilities of male and female consumer ontologies.

Advertisements are spectacles; they transform objects into a "fantasy visual display of signs and symbols" (Hall, 2013, p. 240). It can "pull a spectator into their signifying effects...to produce their viewers in particular ways" (Rose, 2016, pp. 134, 136). There are inherent politics behind commercial advertising, as they are not mere tools of communication but their ideological function is to broadcast ideas and circulate cultural classifications (Sassatelli, 2007). Rather than conforming to certain ideological representations, consumers can 'bend' advertisements to suit their way of life using creative means of consumer resistance by reinterpreting ideals communicated by advertisements (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Through marketing communication, marketers utilise institutionalised consumer-brand

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<sup>18</sup> According to Åkestam, Rosengren and Dahlen (2017, p. 795), *femvertising* is "short for female empowerment advertising" and can be defined as "advertising that challenges traditional female advertising stereotypes".

relationships to craft brand meanings and reproduce those imageries of consumer-brand assemblages (Bjerrisgaard, Kjeldgaard & Bengtsson, 2013). However, recently, gender transgression against the dominant social gender order has risen. Coeval with this, to not become myopic, some firms, especially fashion and clothing leading the charge, are taking quantum leaps to co-opt these movements. The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) of the United Kingdom has regulated that gender-stereotyped advertising is prohibited in the UK starting from June 2019 and asked firms to comply with these new standards by proscribing to design ads where individuals are unable to perform anything or become successful owing to their gender or where men are socially censured when they perform their roles in traditionally feminine consumption spaces (Shibley, 2019). This indicates how marketers and policy-makers are striving to move beyond stereotypes and hegemonic norms.

## Ethical Considerations

I conducted an ethics self-assessment of my study, particularly pertaining to data collection and processing because I believe this is an area of my research where ethical concerns need to be considered. In the following sections, I cogently articulate potential ethical issues that posed methodological challenges, followed by how I addressed them.

### Reviewing Ethical Issues

In research ethics, the principle of confidentiality, as found in the ‘Helsinki Declaration’ and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), entails that any information associated with the “private sphere of a person” that they would not want to disclose to others—in contrast to publicly available information, “which everyone has a right to access”—must respect the “dignity and autonomy of the participant” by not divulging such information and ensuring the privacy of the participants (Bos, 2020, p. 153). However, there is a problem in defining what information is personal and private and what is not. This is, however, more complicated in the Swedish context because personal information—such as name, age, address, income, and phone number—of Swedish residents is publicly available in many directories, such as [ratsit.se](http://ratsit.se), [hitta.se](http://hitta.se) and [upplysning.se](http://upplysning.se). Conversely, this also accentuates the privacy and confidentiality debate in the opposite way; because such information is readily available in public platforms, it is even more important and challenging to ensure that participants’ personal data is pseudonymised and cannot be traced back to them.

“Personal data is anything that can be linked, directly or indirectly, to a physical person, such as address, de-coded data where the code key remains, or data that together with other information can identify an individual” (Swedish Research Council, 2017, p. 71). While my study involves handling—which includes storing, summarising and transferring such data—of personal data, as defined above, it does *not* involve handling *sensitive* personal data and data concerning breaches of the law (Lund University Staff Pages, 2020; The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, 2016, p.119/38-9; Swedish Research Council, 2017, p. 71; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Council of Europe, 2018). Hence, it does not require the approval of an ethics review board, in accordance with the Swedish Ethical Review Act (Etikprövningslagen, SFS 2003:460). Because I did not study consumer identities, my research did not contain sensitive personal data (känsliga personuppgifter), or ‘special categories of personal data’, within the framework of Modernised Convention 108 (Article 6) and GDPR (Article 9), such as race or ethnic origin, political views, religious or philosophical convictions, trade union membership, health, sex life or sexual orientation, genetic information and biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person, or legal offences involving crimes, criminal convictions, procedural coercive measures, or administrative detention; neither does my study entail a physical intervention, poses obvious physical or mental harm to participants, or involves traceable biological materials collected from anyone dead or living. Nevertheless, even though I did not collect sensitive personal data, I collected personal data through interviews, and thus, still needed to abide by regulations.

Because my study involved interviewing research participants, informed consent was necessary as a means to provide participants with protection against any harm that may come to them due to their involvement. As they are best positioned to adjudicate what is in their interest, they must be shown the respect that they are not merely a means to an end. Moreover, another potential problem of merely attempting to acquire informed consent is that participants, mostly from the Bangladeshi diaspora, might have just sign it without having understood the information, merely to appear smart and not rude or to accommodate a fellow Bangladeshi. COVID-19 complicated this further as interviews were conducted digitally through Zoom and Google Meet. Furthermore, one conceivable challenge with interpretive research is that it requires rich, thick and contextual data, and hence, it can lead to collecting unnecessary overabundances of data. Even when data is highly anonymised, “contextual identifiers” still remain within the narrative of an individual (Bos, 2020, p. 161) because data is situated.

Apart from data collection, data processing involves storing data in a secured location. Although all empirical materials are stored in my password-protected work computer provided by Lund University, I have recorded interviews using my mobile phone and laptop and the recorded audio has been in my iCloud for some time. This

posed a risk of data breach and was an improper treatment of data that can raise concerns.

## **Resolving Ethical Challenges**

Bos (2020) argued that obtaining informed consent is perhaps the most important tool to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, which, according to him, are not the same. Whereas anonymity is “the degree to which the source of a message can be identified”, confidentiality “relates to an agreement between the researcher and the participant...[where] the former concerns the initial collection of data, the latter makes promises to not disclose specific personal information” (Bos, 2020, p. 156). To preserve research participants’ privacy, autonomy, confidentiality and dignity, I strived to maintain a set of practices based on GDPR and the ‘Helsinki Declaration’, as articulated by Bos (2020): (1) that participants are anonymous; (2) I do not collect their data unless I have a good reason to; (3) I must provide them with information about my research, such as its aims and purpose, means of interrogation and who would have access to the data; (4) I must obtain their consent before their participation and provide them with the rights to withdraw anytime they want; and (5) I should enable them to review their accounts and rectify anything in the data as they deem fit.

Before interviews, I always provided participants with a piece of document that I call the ‘Vade Mecum’ (see Appendix D), which provides them with the following information pertaining to my study: (1) my name and institutional affiliation and that I am conducting this study as a part of my PhD; (2) the background, aims and purpose of the study; (3) why and how they have been selected; (4) what would their participation entail, including research procedures meaning how I would conduct the study and that it could take potentially from an hour to two or three; (5) that they would not be exposed to any form of risks or burdens and that I would anonymise their personal information to ensure that they cannot be identified and connected in any way to the data through pseudonymisation; (6) that their data would be handled with confidentiality and who can use and access their data; (7) that their participation could potentially contribute to scientific knowledge that can help us understand more about certain social issues; (8) that their participation is voluntary and they can opt-out anytime without any potential consequences; (9) where and how they would be able to learn about the results of the study; and (10) that I am the contact person and how they can contact me. After going through the document, I asked them to sign two copies to be preserved by each of us.

Due to COVID-19, I had to adapt my procedure and instead opt for a verbal confirmation ‘on the record’ from the participant. An excerpt from my digitally conducted interviews illustrates how I informed them about confidentiality and anonymity (see Appendix D). I always tried to ensure that participants understand the information provided before they give their consent to ensure that it is actually

*informed* consent. I also informed the participants how long I am planning to store the data to improve transparency (ALLEA - All European Academies, 2017) and reassure them.

I tried to ensure that my handling of personal data is in accordance with the Swedish—Personal Data Act (SFS 1998:204) and the Personal Data Ordinance (SFS 1998:1191)—and European regulations, including GDPR. Under GDPR, in addition to the consent of participants, I must ensure that data processing is done in a fair and transparent manner (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and Council of Europe, 2018). Because my research involves dealing with identifiable personal data, I coded the data with a *key* that I securely store separately from the empirical materials. Removing immediately identifying marks by pseudonymisation can potentially help break the connection to the participants. However, deidentified data is still personal data as it allows for backdoor identification. Therefore, I iteratively continued to anonymise the participants as I processed the data.

As I realised the risk of potential data breaches (although my phone and cloud were password-protected in the first place), I removed the sync of documents in my phone and computer that included pseudonymised/anonymised empirical materials, with iCloud. Instead, I regularly started backing up all data from my computer in an encrypted SSD drive and stored it securely. By ensuring that I only collect “personal data inasmuch as this is necessary to answer the research questions” (Wilkinson, 2010, p. 47), I attempted to ensure data minimisation in the later interviews.

## **A Good Research Practice**

This ethical reflection of my study is valuable in evaluating potential ethical challenges in conducting my study. This assessment has led me to understand that my research maintains reliability, honesty, respect and accountability (ALLEA - All European Academies, 2017), as I have strived to ensure (1) transparency, openness and fairness, (2) take responsibility for my work, (3) ensure a sound research design and methodological approach, (4) respect confidentiality of data, (5) that it does no harm (if not good) and (6) espouses high standards of discipline (Lunds Universitet, 2019). I can only hope that my study, therefore, upholds a good research practice.

## **Analytical Apparatuses**

Charmaz (2014) and Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) refer to the analytical stage of the research process as a craft. While the subsequent chapters present the findings from the analysis, this section illustrates that craft, showing ‘how’ (Watson, 1994) I conducted my analysis. Data analysis was conducted using analytical apparatuses

from three sources. First, Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) provided an overarching analytical framework for analysing data in qualitative research that was adopted in this study. Second, analytical and interpretation techniques offered by Spiggle (1994) for consumer research were also used in this study. Finally, data were analysed using the hermeneutic framework by Thompson (1997) for analysing consumer stories. Each of these is first briefly reviewed below, followed by the analytical procedure adopted in this study to understand consumer discourses.

Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) indicated that three potential predicaments can emerge while analysing data from qualitative research: (1) ‘the problem of chaos’, (2) ‘the problem of representation’ and (3) ‘the problem of authority’, which can be respectively redressed by (1) *sorting*, which involves various techniques of organising and ordering data through identifying, enumerating, selecting and distinguishing, (2) *reducing* calls for condensing the materials into a more manageable form to closely examine them and (3) *arguing* entails using the data to make sense of it and derive findings, formulate meanings of those findings and subsequently ‘enter into dialogue’ with other scholars and texts.

For the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data in consumer research, Spiggle (1994) posited various techniques that were used in this study. She described seven tools for data analysis that I used: categorisation, abstraction, comparison, dimensionalisation, integration, iteration and refutation. ‘Categorisation’ involved coding and classification of chunks of interview text based on respondents’ language. I employed ‘abstraction’ to reduce initial empirically grounded categories into higher-order condensed conceptual constructs. I used ‘comparison’ to juxtapose various categories obtained to explore similarities and differences within a text and across texts from various informants’ stories. ‘Dimensionalisation’ involved discerning the features of the identified constructs and categories. ‘Integration’ was used to coalesce certain categories and constructs and reduce the data. Data analysis involved ‘iteration’ in the sense that there was oscillation as I moved along data collection and analysis with each influencing the other. Finally, certain data were removed from the analysis due to ‘refutation’ as they did not fit the emerging conceptual constructs. For interpretation Spiggle (1994, p. 491) suggested metaphor and irony, as well as other literary devices, to understand “the meanings of others, identifying patterns in these meanings, and representing how systems of meanings reproduce culture”, some of which were used as inspiration during interpretation.

Thompson (1997) postulated a hermeneutically grounded interpretive framework for generating marketing-relevant insights from ‘texts’ of consumer stories. Hermeneutics is the science and art of interpretation that can be understood through the *Hermeneutic Circle*, which is a perpetual, circular process, where an interpreter’s understanding of an entire text is determined from its ‘parts’, and the individual element is comprehended by referring to the ‘whole’ of which it is a part of (Arnold & Fischer, 1994; Gummesson, 2003). It is a reiterative spiral of understanding that leads to a progressively deeper understanding, as we oscillate



from our pre-understanding to our understanding, and subsequently enrich our initial grasp (Holbrook & O'Shaughnessy, 1988; Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Gummesson, 2003; Hirschman, 1986). Hermeneutics is rooted in *Verstehen* philosophy, which is concerned with understanding the shared meanings of culture from the perspective of the 'Other' (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988; Arnold & Fischer, 1994). The hermeneutic interpretation model by Thompson (1997, p. 438) enables three levels of interpretation—“(1) discerning the key patterns of meanings expressed by a given consumer in the texts of his or her consumption stories, (2) identifying key patterns of meaning that emerge across the consumption stories expressed by different consumers, and (3) deriving broader conceptual and managerial implications from the analysis of consumer narratives”—that I have employed in this study.

Additionally, Ryan and Bernard (2003) suggested various ways to look for themes in qualitative data—such as repetitions, indigenous typologies/categories, metaphors/ analogies, transitions, similarities/differences, linguistic connectors, missing data and theory-related materials—that I used in this study. Based on these analytical apparatuses, I presented my data analysis in three stages: (1) coding and categorising, (2) coalescing and condensing and (3) contending and conversing. The data from interviews were augmented with field notes, as suggested by Robert M. Emerson (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018), which I started doing after the first few interviews. The interview data also contained jottings (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013) that I did while transcribing the data.

## **Coding and Categorising**

The first step of my data analysis involved coding and categorising, as identified by Spiggle (1994). Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) described it as '*sorting*', which means categorising data and assigning it in some form of order. However, such categorising required coding the materials first. Charmaz (2014) contended that coding materials is the initial step in data analysis. Many scholars bifurcate coding into two parts. The *first* type of coding that I did entailed labelling and categorising empirical materials for the first time, which Charmaz (2014) labelled as 'initial' or 'open' coding. Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) called them the 'first cycle coding' and Maanen (1979) and Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) used 'first-order concepts'. Coding empirical materials truly required me to 'hang out' with the data (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018), as I more than once 'resorted' or reclassified my coding. For systematic and sentence-by-sentence coding and thematisation, I used NVivo 12 (a screenshot is provided in Appendix E). Using qualitative data analysis applications can provide stringent analysis, improve transparency of the analytical process, enable theorisation (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2008) and offer an easier organisation of data and themes.

I strived to construct the codes in the interviewees' language, *in-vivo* codes, using participants' own words to understand their realities and meanings, but I merely highlighted what I think was significant and described what I thought was happening, making it my own view of their perspectives (Charmaz, 2014). Furthermore, although the initial coding was simple, short, wide-ranging and spontaneous, such coding was influenced by my pre-understanding from visual analysis of these advertisements, a process that Kvale labelled 'categorisation' (Charmaz, 2014; Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Recurring contents that are likely to form a theme were emphasised during coding (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018; Spiggle, 1994). I coded with topics and themes, which are descriptive (*e.g. Nostalgic consumption*) and with gerunds/actions/processes (*e.g. Distancing from gender ideology*) (Charmaz, 2014; Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013). Some codes were labelled with emotions (*e.g. Frustration*), whereas some other codes reflected participants' values (*e.g. Progressiveness during upbringing*) (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013). These first-order codes were then further developed in the next stage to identify emergent themes.

## **Coalescing and Condensing**

Coalescing and condensing is the *second* type of coding I conducted, which involves the development of themes from initially coded data, which Charmaz (2014) labelled as 'focused or 'selective' coding, Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2013) called them the 'second cycle coding', Maanen (1979) labelled them as 'second-order concepts', Gioia, Corley and Hamilton (2013) used the terms 'second-order themes or aggregate dimensions' and Spiggle (1994) referred to them as 'abstraction'. Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) identified this stage of analysis as '*reducing*', because at this stage I studied and evaluated initial codes and selected several interesting ones that revealed patterns and concurrently connected and coalesced them. This is similar to Steiner Kvale's distilling process of reducing the interview transcripts into smaller meanings or themes (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). In this stage, at times I indulged in using my own theoretical labels, supplanting respondents' local vocabulary (Gioia, Corley & Hamilton, 2013). I used categorical reduction by prioritising certain categories and discarding certain categories from the coded data (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Repetitions, indigenous typologies and categories, metaphors and analogies and similarities and differences are some techniques (Ryan & Bernard, 2003; Swedberg, 2012) I used to identify themes from the coded data and condense them to a manageable number.

## **Contending and Conversing**

The final stage of analysis involves contending and conversing. Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) refer to this as 'arguing', which entails presenting the findings of

the analysis and engaging in theoretical conversations with existing knowledge. In line with the research question, three finalised themes that emerged from the findings are presented in the three next chapters using Emerson's excerpt-commentary model (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). Based on the findings from the three next chapters, the subsequent chapter provides a discussion by engaging in theoretical conversation with existing literature. A summary of findings, to be presented in the upcoming three chapters, is provided below.

As migrant informants from Bangladesh arrived in the new culture, they were exposed to diverse gender ideologies in Sweden. They drew from these contesting gender discourses to engage in ideological navigation to make sense of their acculturation experience using marketplace resources—consumption and marketing communication. This engagement is defined as gender transculturation. Hence, the findings of this research—gender transculturation—illustrate respondents' discursive views and beliefs as they navigate between four different forms of gender ideologies. The following chapters delve into how these respondents navigate contested ideological tensions—as manifested through their narratives—during their acculturation through three different modes of gender transculturation: ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis.

Each chapter focuses on a mode of navigating ideological tensions—and hence, gender transculturation—offering an alternative way of understanding consumer acculturation processes. The concept of ideological ossification was adopted from existing literature within CCT (Chatzidakis, Maclaran & Varman, 2021; Zwick, 2018). While the concept of ideological oscillation has been employed outside consumer research (Drell, 2000; Hirschman, 2002; Lieber, 2013; Žižek, 2005), the notion of oscillation has been used within some CCT studies (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Molander, 2021; Schmitt, Brakus & Biraglia, 2022). Furthermore, the ideas of osmosis (Gibson & Papa, 2000) and ideological osmosis (Li, 2012) have been even more scarcely used in academic literature. However, these concepts were useful in explaining respondents' navigation of gender ideologies. Participants engaged in ideological ossification when their ideologies remained rigid, as they drew from traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies and demonstrated resistance towards gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies. Respondents also engaged in ideological oscillation as they retained traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies and reworked their views and beliefs by concurrently adopting gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies—and blended them to strike a balance—as discerned from their narratives. Finally, some informants engaged in ideological osmosis, as their early gender socialisation waned, and they habituated their views and beliefs on gender by romanticising and reflecting on gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies and resisting traditional patriarchal ideology.

Gender transculturation as a concept is about how migrant consumers navigate contesting ideological tensions related to gender in their acculturation experiences

as discerned through their interview narratives. Thus, gender transculturation can be viewed as a construct comprised of negotiations of views and beliefs on gender relations experienced through the marketplace and consumption. Based on these key constructs embraced in gender transculturation, the next three analysis chapters are each structured in four distinct parts. The first three sections within these three chapters discuss the various ways these respondents navigated contesting gender ideologies. Each section was crafted to demonstrate the negotiation between two distinct forms of discourses on gender that influenced participants' views and beliefs on gender. The final section of each chapter showcases their consumption practices within each of these three modes of gender transculturation. Similar to Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004, p. 219), I employed "cultural objects to understand the role of consumption in negotiating border crossings" of migrant respondents. Respondents' narratives about the consumption of various cultural objects and communication in the marketplace were thus used to understand their gender transculturation in the final section of each of the three upcoming chapters.

These three chapters together illustrate respondents' navigation through these three modes of gender transculturation in consumer acculturation and their consumption practices specific to these modes of ideological navigations. These next three chapters are then followed by a concluding chapter that connects all the threads from these three chapters and discusses how gender transculturation contributes theoretically to academic conversations on gender, ideologies and consumer acculturation. Now, dear reader, let us delve into these three modes of navigation of gender transculturation in upcoming three chapters: ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis. Don't get lost in all the 'O's or the 'R's!

# Ideological Ossification

This chapter analyses how migrant consumers employ what here I call ideological ossification—the first mode of gender transculturation—in their navigation of contesting gender ideologies to make sense of their acculturation experience using marketplace resources and communication. I refer to ideological ossification as a fixation on a certain ideological position and reluctance or failure to pursue or confront any countervailing ideals to change that ideological position. I argue that some respondents in this study struggle with ideological ossification, as they find it difficult to acclimatise with their host cultural transgressive gender ideologies. Hence, their consumption and gendered practices—discerned through their views about gender relations during the interviews—reflect an unwillingness to change their ideological makeup acquired during socialisation in their home culture. The term ‘ideological ossification’ is borrowed from Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman (2021, pp. 5, 18), who defined it as an “ideological fixation on resisting consumer capitalism”, and hence, it is “the pragmatic attenuation of idealism”, which can act as a threat to consumer movements. In a similar vein, the term was also employed by Zwick (2018), who conceptualised how the marketplace enables the ossification of neo-liberal ideologies. These authors have highlighted how ideologies can become fixed, rigid and resistant to change. Similarly, in this chapter, I also demonstrate how ideologies can be rigid and resistant to change as respondents navigate through four contesting gender ideologies.

Most respondents underwent ideological ossification when they started attempting to acculturate into their new host culture. As time passed, the cultural shocks they experienced became evident. They found it difficult to adapt and started missing and reminiscing about their home culture. At this mode of navigation, respondents experienced a wide gamut of cultural and ideological tensions. They started to feel the chilly and dark winters of the Nordics and often become miserable. Things that were interesting initially as they arrived started to look not so novel and exhilarating anymore. They forged a strong connection with their home culture, which became evident in their consumption, beliefs and practices. They started to reciprocate and emulate their home cultural practices in their host culture, consuming delicacies of their home. However, they were often engaged in a constant state of comparison between the home and host cultures. In this mode of gender transculturation, participants were *rigid* and *resistant*: rigid in their traditional patriarchal and Islamic

gender ideologies, primarily from their home culture and resistant towards the adoption of gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies in their host culture.

In their dominated consumer acculturation model, Üstüner and Holt (2007) showcased how poor Turkish migrant women coming from rural areas to urban Ankara pursued a 'counterhegemonic project' by re-enacting their gendered ideology from the village against the dominant host culture gender ideology of the *Batıcı* lifestyle. They demonstrated how mothers and daughters from rural areas in Turkey reconstructed their ideologies from their village culture in the city, against the dominant ideology. Although these consumers embraced the benefits of living in an urban area in several ways—by indigenising modern technologies such as television, refrigerator, or washing machine in their squatters, although removing any traces of the *Batıcı* ideology from these technologies—their underlying ideology remained ossified. They also constructed 'myopic aesthetic' by engaging with the consumption of aesthetics imbued with their village ideals, such as colourful rugs and memorabilia that reminded them of their home in the village and circumventing the consumption of city goods. These consumers collectively constructed their home culture's gender ideology within the confines of their squatters. They typically evaded commodities and temptations from the host *Batıcı* culture completely. This indicates how these migrant women attempted to reminisce about their home cultural ideology by bringing their home cultural consumption practices to their host culture. The migrant mothers often protested that their daughters dressed up in skimpy and revealing city attires, illustrating their ideological ossification. Similar to Üstüner and Holt (2007), in this study, informants' minority gender ideologies conflicted with and are aggrandised by the dominant culture, although unlike in Üstüner and Holt (2007), they are not forced to struggle with their dominant ossified ideologies necessarily from their lower position in the social order. Similarly, participants in this research also showcased their ideological ossification as they reconstruct their ossified traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies in their new host context.

This mode of ideological navigation can be paralleled with the behaviour of consumers from the 'More Greenlandic than Greenland hyperculture' identity position of the post-assimilationist acculturation model by Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005). They argued that informants consumed commodified Greenlandic products and services—such as foods, hides, national costumes and souvenirs—in Denmark to become more Greenlandic than Greenlandic, constructing a hyperculture, in which hyped commercial items were consumed as symbols of authentic culture for cultural maintenance. Respondents with ideological ossification, thus, also become more Bangladeshi than Bangladeshis in Bangladesh through their consumption. This mode of gender transculturation can be, to a little extent, also compared with 'the oscillating pendulum' position from Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard's (2005) model, embodying respondents who experience estrangements and enticement of both the home and the host cultures. These

respondents feel the urge to withdraw themselves from the perceived mechanistic constraints of the host cultural marketplace and incessantly engage in border crossing. From time to time, they crave undiluted amounts of romanticised home cultural food, social interactions, seasonality and nature to ‘recharge their batteries’. They also romanticise a permanent return to their home culture one day.

Moreover, this mode of navigation can also be, to some extent, juxtaposed with a fusion of ‘maintenance’, ‘segregation’ and certain aspects of ‘resistance’ positions posited by Peñaloza (1994). She discussed how respondents maintained certain facets of their home culture; particularly their consumption patterns were reminiscent of Mexican cultures. This was characterised by their telephone calls back home, food preparation and consumption, usage of Spanish media and recreation activities. This mode of transculturation, involving the ossification of home cultural ideology, directly coincides with the maintenance outcome of the model by Peñaloza (1994). Second, in Peñaloza’s (1994) model, participants often occupied sites that were physically segregated from the mainstream in the marketplace, communities and households, similar to many informants in this study, at this mode of navigation. Finally, in the resistance stage of her model, respondents underwent pressures to change and resisted pulls of the enticing host culture because they felt that the host culture did not have a positive influence on them, particularly considering the materialism, punctuality, seclusion and discrimination they relate with the host culture. That can also be said for certain participants in this study, who resisted the host culture and reproduced their home culture’s patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies in their practices.

Chytкова (2011, pp. 274-275) highlighted how Romanian women in Italy draw from gender discourses in Romanian society “to form a certain ideal of female identity”, defined by their ethos of ‘self-sacrifice’—that emanates from the communist ideology of a mother sacrificing her own interests—and ‘passive endurance’—inspired by the “martyred Virgin Mary” imagery with the concurrent demonisation of enterprising/active women—that requires women to struggle and sustain in the face of hardships. Some of her participants also indicated that modern women in Italy were viewed in a negative light due to egoism when talking about their lack of self-sacrifice and being engrossed with their own selves. To them:

the natural way of “doing” gender is to “clean, do things at home.” A woman is not expected to pursue her own individual interests until such tasks, effectuated primarily for the family, have been completed; clearly putting the interests of the immediate social network (family) first. (Chytкова, 2011, pp. 278-279)

A similar script was discerned in this study, as migrant informants drew on their traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies in their gender transculturation.

The rest of this chapter is structured in four parts. The first three sections demonstrate how respondents navigated their ideological ossification through

rigidity and resistance. In the first section, it is shown that some participants rigidified traditional patriarchal and resisted egalitarian gender discourses. The next section showcases that they rigidified traditional patriarchal and resisted transgressive gender discourses. The third section presents that they were rigid towards Islamic and resisted transgressive gender discourses. The last part of the chapter highlights how informants in this mode of gender transculturation employed temporal consumption as a part of their consumption practices in their host culture. Together, informants in this mode of gender transculturation demonstrate how they navigate contesting gender ideologies drawing more from traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies while resisting gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies.

## Rigidifying Patriarchal & Resisting Egalitarian Gender Ideologies

Some respondents illustrated that ideological ossification is expressed in their cultural views and beliefs about gender relations in consumption, marketplace communication and society, discerned through their interview narratives. In this section, it is shown how participants demonstrated rigidity towards traditional patriarchal and resistance against egalitarian gender discourses by upholding an essentialist gendered discourse, reproducing patriarchal gender structures from their home culture in their egalitarian host culture and engaging in normative conformity.

### **An Essentialist Gender Discourse**

When probed to talk about gender and distinctions between men and women, respondents demonstrated their association with an essentialist gender discourse, which embodies traditional patriarchal ideology. In the following excerpts, Shakib, Samir and Mehzabin associated gender with an essentialist definition, as discussed earlier. Shakib talked about how men have more physical strength, better mental capacity in terms of calmness and cool-headedness and different behaviour in terms of spending their time and money. He showcased the physical prowess of men, who must do physically laborious tasks to relieve their female partners. Although he claimed in the end that he does not elevate men over women in terms of intellect and attempted to showcase that he only upholds the gender stereotypes, he still held a normative and essentialist gender orientation, which he is very much aware of. He also demonstrated traditional patriarchal ideology by claiming that men, like himself, ‘want’ to have a life of their own, but women care more about their children and less about having time for themselves. He also talked about the responsibilities men imposed upon them in a traditional Bangladeshi society in terms of earning a



living and supporting their families as the primary breadwinners of the family. He claimed that men in Bangladeshi society are expected to take care of their parents financially once they are unable to sustain themselves. His definition of ‘man’ projects strength, responsibility, dependency, independence, and authoritarianism – all of which embody strong gender stereotyping (Åkestam, 2017; Goffman, 1987; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Hatzithomas, Boutsouki & Ziamou, 2016), and thus, connote traditional patriarchal ideology. He is, however, aware that his views are influenced by his patriarchal gender ideology, along with his resistance towards gender-egalitarian ideals, thus demonstrating his ideological ossification.

I can always see some basic differences between males and females from a genetic perspective. That's of course because of how I grew up, because of my roots, my culture, my society, there's always this picture in my brain about males and females, it's very distinctive, very sharp. Their way of thinking and physical strength is different. The sense of responsibility and capability differs a lot between males and females. Men want to spend [money], while females want to spend most of their time with their kids, but males don't. They want their own life. I think a man should be responsible for more than his wife or girlfriend. He should think more about the safety and well-being of his family, parents and kids. He should think about how he can support her, his partner, in all possible ways and help her by doing physically challenging stuff, not to stress his partner. Although I guess in terms of intellect, I feel there is no difference. (Shakib)

I think men and women are different in terms of their thinking patterns and hormones are different. You can't change your physiology here you know. So, consumption will definitely be different. (Samir)

In terms of research, male and female brains work in different ways, and that is biology, it's science. (Mehzabin)

Mehzabin similarly indicated that such differences can be attributed to science and biology. In a similar vein, Samir also explained how there is nothing wrong with the idea that men and women consume differently because of their different biological ‘essence’. Shakib, Samir and Mehzabin demonstrated their essentialist perceptions emanating from traditional patriarchal ideology. They demonstrated their subscription to traditional gender roles and highlighted their orientation with ‘sex difference’ essentialist gender discourse (Fischer, 2015). They brought in biological differences between the genders to highlight how men and women are different base on their mental, physical and behavioural makeup (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Thus, these respondents, in this instance, demonstrated their ossification by rigidifying their patriarchal and resisting egalitarian gender ideologies.

In the following excerpts, Zaman discussed how gender stereotyping is often necessary. He started by mentioning that gender stereotyping can often be problematic and needs to be counteracted sometimes, but by using ‘not good in a

broad sense', he implied that it is generally necessary unless in small instances when it poses social harm<sup>19</sup>. In a similar vein, in the rest of the excerpt, he went on to explain why 'nature' should be accepted as it is. However, it is difficult to ascertain what constitutes harm in Zaman's viewpoint because any form of stereotype can be helpful to a certain group of individuals at the cost of others. He reasoned that these stereotypes are progression with roots in nature and biology as well as are culture-historically produced. He demonstrated an essentialist orientation in his thoughts, as he argued that women can only be attracted to virile men, as body hair signifies masculinity. He contended that the masculine features of men are not necessarily to be changed. He went on to emphasise that men and women are distinct and there is no reason to upset the status quo, reiterating his ossification of a traditional patriarchal ideology and resistance towards the gender-egalitarian ideal.

Stereotyping is not good in a broad sense case, for males, females, or the other gender, breaking the stereotypes is good sometimes. But as long as it's not hurting society, I would say it's not necessary to push it so much to disrupt the normal and break the stereotypes. Because stereotypes didn't come in a day, they came through generations, and there must be some reasons for humanity too to have these stereotypes in some cases. And I think nature has put some stereotypes as well. It's, you know, that the male will be hairier than the women and you can never deny that. If you say to break the stereotypes let's wax all the hair from men's bodies then even women will not be attracted to them. Because it's in the genes. I'm not saying I support waxing or not. Maybe if it's too much you can of course, why not? But this is a natural thing. And if you wax too much, it doesn't work for me. We don't need to change what defines the characteristics of males. For me, it's nice to have differences between men and women. Nature put the difference in men and women so that we feel attracted to each other. We don't have to push that everything should be the same for men and women. They are not the same. So, I don't believe in the philosophy that as long as society is working fine. (Zaman)

In the narrative about marketplace communication, participants demonstrated an essentialist understanding of gender, showcasing that their thoughts and practices are more in line with traditional patriarchal ideology. Samir stated that products should be explicitly differentiated for men and women. Working in the healthcare sector, he provided an example of how products such as condoms can only be used by males and contraceptive pills by females. He exemplified how hormonal products for men and women are different and cannot be reduced to gender-neutral products because of their different biological requirements that stem from their biological makeup. He discussed gender stereotypes in products within his industry that still exist even in Sweden, identifying how men are more rugged, strong and powerful, whereas women are more soft, caring and delicate, upholding traditional

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<sup>19</sup> This reminded me of a famous quote from the television series *Game of Thrones*, where the lead character Jon Snow said, 'everything before the word 'but' is horseshit'.

gender stereotypes used in the Swedish marketplace. Shakib, here, simply stated that this is 'science', meaning that men and women are fundamentally different, which has been proven by scientific evidence. His discursive argumentation structure, which culminates in claims that products should be marketed based on binary genders, demonstrates his ideological ossification of traditional patriarchal ideology and rejection of gender-egalitarian ideology.

Condoms are for males, whereas contraceptive pills are mostly for females, certain hormonal products are mostly for females, but then there are some products that delay ejaculation for men. So, you cannot say that it should be the same for everyone. In my industry, it's still the case where you show females as more feminine, soft, caring, like flowers, and male is like strong, powerful and rugged. Sorry, you have to see the difference here. (Samir)

It's very logical to use males for selling those products that's scientifically for men, and vice versa. This is science. (Shakib)

Samir continued to differentiate products based on the colour used in communication and packaging, something that has been established by social and marketplace discourses. He identified red and its variations as belonging to women and blue to men. This ossification of a patriarchal gender ideology has been entrenched in Samir. Discussing his consumption, Mahfuz posited that he preferred to buy products in colours such as grey or silver, which are more socially acceptable for him, in contrast with more feminine colours such as pink. By specifically mentioning that he did not have anything against pink, Mahfuz emphasised that he should not be considered as someone who has stereotypes, even if he did engage in stereotyping.

A lot of companies probably think about the colour coding with a spectrum like reddish, pinkish, violetish, a zone that is more towards females, whereas blue is more [for] masculine community. (Samir)

I think there is something like, let's say, the colour or the look of a gadget. I definitely choose silver or grey because that just goes with me. But yeah, I do look at like let's say pink headphones, it's not that I don't mind pink in my designs but I don't use pink in my let's say, my clothes as often. It's not like I have something against a particular colour, but I guess it has more to do with taste. For example, I wouldn't mind wearing a pink hoodie even, but I probably wouldn't want pink headphones. (Mahfuz)

According to Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018), marketers have long treated gender as a key demographic variable to segment markets and have often been accused of contributing to gender stereotyping by emphasising (or even constructing) gender differences rather than similarities. For example, pink is associated with girls and blue with boys, although a century ago, pink was considered a stronger colour, used for boys. Drawing from American Earnshaw's

trade magazine for children's wear in 1918, they stated that “the generally accepted rule is pink for the boys, and blue for the girls. The reason is that pink, being a more decided and stronger color, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl” (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018, p. 186). Accordingly, the authors demonstrated how associations of masculinity and femininity are historically constructed, and hence, evolve over time. During the post-war period men, women and youth were approached as market segments, which mirrored how designers and marketers viewed and constructed men and women in particular ways. Design conventions were based on a cultural belief that products should be natural extensions of men's and women's true dispositions. Shiny metal and high technological performance were included in products targeted at men, whereas products in bright colours were targeted at women. Interestingly, Mahfuz also indicated that certain colours have now become more acceptable for certain products. A pink hoodie is more acceptable for him perhaps because more men have started wearing pink, whereas a pink gadget is less common among men. This demonstrated his adherence to patriarchal gender structures and resistance against an egalitarian one in Sweden.

In the two following excerpts, Zaman also demonstrated that he drew from an essentialist gender discourse of traditional patriarchal ideology. In the first quote, he argued that clothing for men and women is different owing to different body shapes but that also helps differentiate people along gender lines. Such an essentialist differentiation, he asserted, is important for attraction. In the second excerpt, Zaman discussed that the consumption of men and women is different because women are influenced by the brands and the advertising industry to unnecessarily consume cosmetics and beatification products. In both these articulations, he showcased an ossification of his thoughts and beliefs based on his traditional patriarchal ideology and resistance towards gender egalitarianism.

As males and females have different body shapes, so we are used to seeing different clothing. So, you can differentiate between the genders. If you cannot differentiate between the genders when you see their clothing, I think it loses the charm that a male or female is supposed to feel for each other. I don't see the point of gender-neutral clothing unless it's a t-shirt, everyone can wear a t-shirt. (Zaman)

I think women consume too much cosmetics which is not needed actually. I mean of course, it's good to look good. But that cosmetic industry kind of takes over women's minds and those things manipulate them to buy a lot of things that's not necessary. (Zaman)

All these respondents demonstrated that their views about gender are heavily influenced by their traditional patriarchal gender ideology as they exhibited an essentialist view, arguing how gender is our biological essence, instead of social construction.

## Reproduction of Gender Structures

Ideological ossification reproduces patriarchal gender structures from one's home culture into their life in the host culture. Mehzabin indicated that gender structures from immigrants' home cultures are reproduced in Sweden. She complained about Muslim men that she encountered coming from Bangladesh or those with particular Middle Eastern backgrounds—referring to certain refugees in Sweden—and how they demonstrated a lack of respect towards women. This indicated that traditional patriarchal gender ideology in migrants' home cultures can be often reproduced in the host culture, as her experience in Sweden resembled the patriarchal challenges she encountered in Bangladesh. However, she also maintained that Swedish society has enacted different gender structures, which also do not enable these individuals to reanimate their patriarchal gender structures completely.

I would definitely say that people who come from Middle Eastern backgrounds or like a lot of people from Bangladesh, I have seen them, they don't have enough respect for the other gender. Because they grow up in a society, which works in a different way and they never want to learn new things and then they never want to grow or accept that they might be wrong. Those who come from Middle Eastern countries, they don't have enough respect for girls. I know Bangladeshi people as well; they don't have enough respect. But they don't act in other ways because it's not okay according to the law of society and that's a good thing. (Mehzabin)

Mehzabin also discussed how Bangladeshi culture and gender norms are reproduced in the Bangladeshi diaspora in Sweden. She reminisced about her early contacts with others in the Bangladeshi community and how she was not comfortable with other *bhabis*<sup>20</sup>. She highlighted how her demeanour, beliefs and behaviour were different from those of other women in the community—which can be interpreted as due to her transgressive upbringing and primary gender socialisation—and hence were often in conflict when she talked to them. It can be interpreted that in Bangladeshi communities, group chats are often gendered, and hence, her husband was often left out of the conversation because he was a Swede in a group of Bangladeshi men.

I was a bit distant from Bangladeshis, not mixing that much. There are a lot of reasons. I'm not like other *bhabis*, so I can't mix. I don't feel comfortable with them, so whenever I'm with them, it gets a bit weird and I am quite straightforward as well, so I don't have that good reputation because I talk in front of people about some things that are not wrong, so I had a problem with some people in Umeå as well like when

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<sup>20</sup> The literal translation of *bhabhi* is elder brother's wife or sister-in-law. In Bangladesh, it is also colloquially used in other ways, such as referring to a wife or girlfriend of one's friends, colleagues, or neighbours, or even simply addressing an unknown married woman, to confer respect to the woman. In this context, the respondent meant other married women in the community.

I was talking about women's rights and stuff. I didn't feel like myself a lot of time in Bangladeshi communities. They didn't find me like themselves. They didn't want me as well. I wasn't invited that much as well like others. As I am with a Swedish guy and I was always with him, they didn't find him [Bangladeshi]. So, we found ourselves outside of the community. I wasn't with the community that much, maybe either three or four times in some special programs. (Mehzabin)

Mehzabin's exclusion into the outgroup of the Bangladeshi diaspora in her city can be explained by social identity theory. In their social identity theory, Tajfel and Turner (1979) explained how an individual's self-concept and identity are defined based on the membership in groups. The affiliation of an individual in a social group enables the elevation of social position, which boosts self-esteem by comparing and distinguishing themselves from members of the outgroup. Individuals whose identity diverges from the group are cast as outgroup or 'them' from the in-group or 'us' (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Mehzabin's narration is one of exclusion as she was cast in the outgroup, but also a demonstration of how gender structures in Bangladesh are reproduced in Sweden. As a woman, she was expected to hang out with other women and was discriminated because she did not adhere to expected feminine behaviour. Viewing with a post-structuralist gender lens, it could also be interpreted that she passes as the 'Other' (Bhabha, 1983; Spivak, 1985), amidst a community of immigrants dominated by traditional patriarchal ideology.

Sarah found Swedes comparatively more aloof and unapproachable compared to Bangladeshis. However, she drew out the nuances between Swedes living in urban and suburban areas. She indicated that people in the suburbs were more friendly and welcoming like people from her home country, which she desired. She also provided an example of how her neighbour was unwelcoming, despite her efforts to build a connection. She demonstrated her resistance against Swedish gender equality by embodying her role as a 'mother and homemaker' and expected similar reciprocation from her Swedish neighbour.

First when I came, I felt that people are very reserved and cold, lack warmth. I felt that they are too much into themselves. It's different in Stockholm, it's different in suburbs. When I visit my husband's son's place in the suburb, it's more than *hej*. I like their culture. There it's weird if you don't make conversation, but here it's the other way around, which I don't like. Once I lost a thing of mine. My neighbour found it and returned it. They have a child like my daughter, so on the same day, so I went to thank her and took expensive chocolates, hoping to connect with her since both of us were mothers and home-makers. But she was just waiting for me to leave, so I didn't prolong the conversation. I don't even know her name! (Sarah)

Hasan and Zaman, in the following excerpts, shared that they have to regularly send remittances to Bangladesh. Remittances from migrants are a major part of the national income expenditure in Bangladesh, and a key source of income for many households in Bangladesh (Sikder & Ballis, 2013). Hasan and Zaman indicated that

as sons they have certain responsibilities to look after their parents and financially take care of their families. This demonstrated that their gender role remains unchanged, based on traditional patriarchal ideology, despite their acculturation.

I have to maintain the expenditure of my family in Bangladesh, it's my responsibility. (Hasan)

I send money back home. I send a big chunk of my salary to my parents in my hometown. (Zaman)

Samir, Shakib and Faria here talked about their respective spouses and their homes in their host culture. Samir clearly designated home décor and furnishing as a domestic space traditionally associated with femininity. He stated that his wife is in charge of their home, and she makes decisions about what colour their living room and bedroom walls would be. They are merely reproducing Bangladeshi patriarchal gender norms in their new home. In a similar way, Shakib also explained how his wife likes to manage their house. Samir and Shakib reproduced patriarchal gender structures from Bangladesh by assigning the home as a space for women.

This [home decor and furnishing] is another department that my wife is mostly managing, not me. So, I would just listen to what she's thinking about. So, when we moved in, she wanted to make our bedroom a mix of maroon and blue colour and the living room mostly grey and yellow. (Samir)

My wife likes to arrange the house in a very elegant way. (Shakib)

Conversely, Faria reminisced that she bought a PlayStation 4 as a birthday present for her husband, and now he hogs down their television all day playing a football game on the gaming console, resulting in her getting less time for her own self. They reproduced their traditional patriarchal gender structure from their home culture by demonstrating the stereotypical affinity that men have with video games and sports. Consequently, they are resisting egalitarian gender ideals.

My husband recently got a birthday present from me, a PS4 and he plays FIFA a lot now. But I hate it! I can't really believe I did this for him, I was being really nice and now I regret, because I don't really get the TV anymore to myself haha! (Faria)

Zaman and Mahfuz demonstrated that their consumption of furniture and home décor depends on whether they are single or living with their spouse. Zaman and Mahfuz indicated that their lives as bachelor men necessitated them to have low consumption of home aesthetics. Djursaa and Kragh (1998) showed that single men in bachelor flats deliberately organise their homes in a masculine and minimalist way, until they are married when they embrace changes in the home aesthetics with more traditional décor. Similarly, in this context, these men demonstrated a

tendency of living without roots until they get married and settle down. They talked about settling down in a permanent apartment when they get married.

It is also very minimalistic because I have not settled yet. And it is a single room, so I buy whatever is needed just for a single person. I don't usually buy many things to decorate the home. When I move to a permanent place then I would do that. (Zaman)

Since I do not have a place registered under my name, I don't invest a lot in home decor. I only purchased furniture that I require down to the very basics. Other than for decorative purposes, it's just pictures that I have taken that I have framed or just some flowers here and there. I plan not to weigh myself down. (Mahfuz)

Talking about feminised spaces at home, Faria explicated the family dynamics at home, where she is in charge of consumption pertaining to domestic work, such as the kitchen, a traditionally feminine space. She highlighted how her husband is unaware of needs in the kitchen or the bathroom or the dining room because home aesthetics is another traditionally feminine space, once again showcasing how traditional gender structures have been reproduced in her new home because of ideological ossification. She further stressed that men in her life have always stuck to the list during grocery shopping, as they tend not to think about domestic needs and home aesthetics, which is once again the responsibility of the woman of the house. In this instance, it can be argued that traditional patriarchal gender structures from Bangladesh have been reproduced in Anika's home in Sweden because of ideological ossification of her and her partner. Because she identifies with a feminised gender role, based on her home culture ideology, she perceived that she needed to make decisions regarding her household.

In our kitchen, I can name you like, all the stuff that I bought, 80% of the stuff there are bought by me and not by my husband. And he doesn't even see the need of buying these. I see the need of buying three kinds of whisks, he doesn't, because you can do the same work with two forks. It may be because I know the uses and I know that whenever he uses them, he sees and feels the differences, and later realises that alright, *jaha* [yes] this is the reason why I bought those. He also doesn't see the need of buying table mats haha, but if we put that out and it looks nice and then he sees the point and the next time we are shopping, he comes up with a suggestion that maybe we can buy another one. I don't have any brother and the only men that I have seen in my life are my dad and my uncles...I never saw them going into their grocery and buying something extra to their shopping list, it's always like tattattattatta [crossing off items in a list] done, for us, it's like tattattattatta tatta tatta tatta [buying things beyond the list]...I know my dad and my husband would never see the point of buying like *luktar* [fragrance] sticks for the washroom, you know like perfume sticks or scented candles. But if it's there, they always use it and they like it and the next time when they go out, they buy it. (Faria)

I mean in Bangladesh men are expected to do grocery shopping, but here I do grocery shopping or decide on what to buy. I think it has a lot to do with gender roles that I



have, because of me being female. I feel it's a very gendered role that I play in the family that I should be the one deciding what to buy for my home, what to cook and everything. (Anika)

Faria and Anika showcased that they are in charge of everyday consumption decisions about grocery and food, reproducing the traditional patriarchal norm in a Bangladeshi household in their Swedish homes. thus, they were resistant towards a more gender-egalitarian ideology.

## **Conforming to Normative Pressures**

Some respondents have engaged in normative conformity by appearing to have adopted Swedish gender-egalitarian ideology due to pressures, but a deeper probing reflected their ossification of traditional patriarchal gender ideology. In his interview, Shakib talked about assembling IKEA furniture at home, which exemplifies a new experience for Bangladeshi consumers, but his underlying gendered views revealed affinity with his home cultural norms. Here Shakib expressed his reluctance of including his wife in an activity that he characterised as masculine. He indicated that such an activity requires strength as well as a calm mind, both of which are masculine attributes that she lacks. In this instance, he subscribes to a patriarchal discourse of gender that he was indoctrinated in at home. Although he showed a penchant for adopting Swedish values of assembling and constructing things on his own, he was essentially forced to adopt that. It can be interpreted that, in Bangladesh, for instance, he would not have 'the time' to assemble and construct his own house or furniture because one can afford to hire a 'specialist' inexpensive labour to do that instead. Nevertheless, he embodied such activities as masculine because they involve physical prowess, often associated with men. He also highlighted that it requires mental acumen, such as 'patience' and a 'cool head' to read those instructions and women are error-prone and should not be involved in such an activity. They could only act as a stationary figure, only 'holding things' while men accomplish the task. He expressed a form of normative conformity by attempting to showcase how he has adapted to the Swedish culture to blend in, but his statements can be still interpreted as a reproduction of gender structures from Bangladesh to his Swedish home.

I: Me and my wife have been assembling furniture for a couple of weeks. And there's this saying that if a couple can successfully go through assembling IKEA furniture, they wouldn't split up haha! What about you, do you also involve your wife?

S: Haha, I usually do it alone, these things. I never like to involve her [my wife] in these things. Because she doesn't have the patience to wait with a cool head, so what happens is that I make more errors because of her. So, I like to do these assembling myself and I don't involve her.

I: But a lot of furniture requires two people to assemble?

S: Yes, that's true. But whenever there is a step that I can't do it alone, when I am desperate, I just ask her to hold things, and that's it, then I do it myself but I don't let her read the instructions or something haha, because that becomes more difficult. (Shakib)

Sarah also discussed how her husband engages in do-it-yourself (DIY) work at home. She indicated that she held resentment and embarrassment about her husband's education and social status. However, she was impressed with his DIY abilities starting from assembling IKEA furniture to fixing various fittings at home. During her interview, she also mentioned that her husband's son and his girlfriend bought an empty field with a school and converted it into a beautiful vintage house themselves.

Another thing that really bothered me was that my husband is just a high-school graduate. I can't say this to anyone in Bangladesh. Now I have become more mature and started becoming more comfortable and don't have any hesitation or embarrassment in telling people that he is a worker in a parking company. He told me at first that he belongs to an illiterate family, based on the definition in Bangladesh where everyone goes to university. But the number of books he has is amazing, he would always pick up and read a book. I was like my illiterate high-school grad husband can do everything on his own starting from assembling furniture to attaching lights or setting up the dishwasher. It's really good, I don't think I would ever be able to do these. Swedes enjoy doing these handy works, just for fun. (Sarah)

Moisio, Arnould and Gentry (2013) studied masculinities in the context of DIY work among men with high and low cultural capital. They demonstrated that men with high cultural capital use these DIY experiences to either (1) pursue and live the mythical 'blue collar', hardworking, working-man identity through a 'therapeutical class tourism', (2) embody a 'craftsman identity project' to develop and demonstrate their skills and expertise, or (3) use their productive consumption experience as a masculine asset to engage in competition with other men outside the home. In contrast, men with low cultural capital embody their DIY experiences as either (1) a way of performing their masculine identity-defining practices such as barbecuing, watching television, watching and playing sports, or fixing cars, by treating their home as their work, (2) to affirm their symbolic domination over the women in the household, or (3) to demonstrate their capabilities to perform their role of caregiving as male, particularly where women were primary breadwinners in the family. Similarly, Shakib's resistance to involving his wife in their DIY assembling of home furniture symbolises his attempt to perform his masculine role in the house and assert his dominance over his wife by explaining how his wife would just slow him down and mess up the work. The findings of Moisio, Arnould and Gentry (2013) can also be used to understand how DIY experiences are pursued by Sarah, with indications about her husband's low cultural capital.

# Rigidifying Patriarchal & Resisting Transgressive Gender Ideologies

Some participants illustrated ideological ossification by demonstrating rigidity towards traditional patriarchal and resistance against transgressive discourses and upholding an essentialist gendered discourse, resisting commodification of gender transgression from their home culture in their transgressive host culture, and resisting gender transgression by evoking a lack of inclusion.

## An Essentialist Gender Discourse

Shakib discussed the idea that transgender and gender non-binary individuals are simply genetic mutations, highlighting his resistance against gender-transgressive ideology. He exemplified this with mutations done in other species, such as food and animals. While genetic modification in food can be considered progressive, genetic engineering in animals through the manipulation of genes for breeding can be viewed as antipathetic. In this sense, Shakib is looking at gender transgression in a negative light. He further reaffirmed his views by framing the neo-liberal capitalist marketplace as an adversary (Ulver & Laurell, 2020) that proliferates these views of gender transgression. Because of his ideological makeup, he found it difficult to understand how transgender individuals, who identify with a gender that was not assigned at their birth, could really feel differently. In his view, men who identify as women, for instance, would still feel inside like they are men. According to Shakib, even if one undergoes a change in one's gender, one can merely change their physical appearance in terms of clothing for instance, but they would not be able to alter their emotions, thoughts and biological essence. Shakib asserted that he is a scientific person who needs a logical and scientific rationale to base such an argument. He backed up his argument with scientific evidence of different chromosomes that men (XY) and women (XX) have.

This is actually genetic mutation, like we do for other species, like food and animals. I strongly believe that this is the media's work. Even if these men are saying that they changed their gender and are female now, inside they don't feel like a female. I think big companies are behind this. This is business, they are advertising these to make money, taking advantage of this sexual transformation idea. If you are born as a male, your gene is XY and then you suddenly change your appearance, but science doesn't support that it has changed your sensory system and brain signals are now like a female. I am a scientific person, there should be logic and scientifically there is no change. It's really hard to live like a male inside and claim to be female your whole life. Your identity in government documents will not change, how do you prove that you are a female? You have to be born as a female. It will only make conflicts, chaos and darkness in the future. So, if a female doesn't like her life as a female, changes her sex and transforms into a man, how do you give birth in the future? There might

be a requirement for a law to decide who will give birth to a child! This will be a genetic disaster, a catastrophe, and destroy the human race. Just like porn, the government shouldn't allow this by law. (Shakib)

Shakib claimed that it is conflicting if one undergoes gender change and lives one's life as a different gender because one would still feel as their originally assigned gender throughout their life. He claimed that one's gender identity in legal documents would not change, because that has permanence and cannot be altered, and hence, one would not be able to 'prove' their gender after their gender change. Therefore, one needs to be born woman to be female, based on their identification documents. His argument that it is difficult to live your whole life as something that one does not feel inside can be used as a counter-argument to refute his claims. It can be debated that because transgender individuals feel differently inside, they change their gender identity. Most transgender individuals have similar experiences like Bruce Jenner who underwent surgery to become Caitlyn and stated how she has always felt like a woman inside, and hence, she decided to change her gender. Nevertheless, Shakib argued that this would only create conflicts among humans in the future and would not engender social wellness, but rather generate societal disorder.

He further painted that bleak futuristic scenario by arguing that if all the women start becoming men, human reproduction would be challenging, which could result in 'genetic disaster' and the end of humanity as we know it. He narrated that a socio-political actor such as the government might need to step in to make decisions about human reproduction if women start to become men. This further highlights that his views and thoughts about how women are the 'weaker sex' and accordingly, all women might want to change their gender are dictated by traditional patriarchal ideology and a resistance towards gender-transgressive ideology. He went on to argue that the government should intervene in the marketplace to put a stop to this. Because the marketplace is merely reproducing gender transgression, he stressed that the state has a responsibility to arbitrate and lawfully end this. He paralleled this with pornography and argued that undergoing a gender change should be prohibited because it is the logical and moral thing to do. However, he depicted an interesting story and based his arguments on logic, just like he said he did as a scientific individual. In this narration, Shakib pinpointed big brands as adversaries who are behind this false propaganda to advance their capitalistic and business needs, duping consumers and exploiting social issues (Ulver & Laurell, 2020), highlighting his resistance against gender-transgressive ideology.

## **Resisting Commodification of Gender Transgression**

Many respondents illustrated resistance against the Western capitalist and neo-liberal systems and attributed the commodification of Western capitalism to the

marketplace. In the following excerpt, Mizan posed an advanced critique and illustrated that Western capitalism has pervaded and warped the meaning of gender transgression. Mizan's argument here is that clothing is cultural, and accordingly, Western brands should not be allowed to globally proliferate gender-transgressive clothing and monetise on it. His criticism of capitalism and colonialism indicates that advertising is merely a capitalistic tool to colonise the world. It can also be discerned from this text that the normalisation of gender transgression is context-based. He argued against using clothing to communicate one's gender. If someone from the African culture sports an attire based on their cultural ideals, they cannot be reduced to a gendered ideal, just because Western capitalism claims that to be. Wearing skirts in Scotland or a *punjabi* (a traditional South Asian attire that can appear feminine in Western contexts) in Bangladesh is still masculine in their contexts. Hence, the gender transgression depicted in the media and culture is the Western appropriation of gender transgression and cannot be applied locally without considering the context. In his critique of the capitalistic system, Mizan points out that through mass media, the West uses advertisements to dupe consumers like him. Thus, he exhibited his resistance towards the gender-transgressive ideology.

From a post-structural view, gender is in our head, it is psychological, why do I have to express my gender through my clothing? Say, if one is an African, can I tell him don't wear this, wear that, that is gender-neutral, globally very popular? But why? Maybe that African ethnic culture has its own clothing, why do they have to discard that and wear this? This is actually a colonial outreach. All these perspectives are created in Western cultures. Some businesses with capitalistic mentality spread these perspectives throughout the world through media and they try to change people's worldviews and perspectives and their only agenda is business, to increase their sales, to increase their income, and to become rich. Capitalism has a really evil side. In the capitalist system, only a few own most of the resources. A product is bad but they've promoted it such a way that I was convinced to buy that. Often, we get influenced by advertisements and we invest in non-productive products. And in the meantime, someone like me, who lives on a budget, loses all the money. (Mizan)

Mizan emphasised that businesses, driven by their profit motive, proliferate these gender-transgressive ideals through mass media to increase their sales and accumulate wealth. In the meantime, consumers like Mizan are unjustifiably influenced by these capitalistic ideologies. He cited an example of his uncle who consumed Western clothing influenced by Western movies. According to this informant, gender transgression is merely a Western and commodified capitalist construction, spread by Western media to recolonise the colonised in a post-colonial world. Similarly, Zaman also argued that these brands commodifying and promoting gender-transgressive ideology either aim to create positive change in society or increase their sales. He argued that it is difficult to ascertain their actual intent and was sceptical about whether they actually believe in the cause. Like

Mizan, Zaman also indicated that brands might appear to be serving a cause but are profit-maximising to protect their own interests.

Advertisement is all about influencing people and promoting things, so it is actually about promoting capitalism, it's bad because all these companies would eventually end up with all the wealth. When Western media shows something again and again, the Eastern people, the Global South, form a perception that maybe this is good, maybe I need to buy this. Then they come up with another type of dress, now buy this. Once they made bell-bottom pants famous through the James Bond series, I used to see my uncles wearing bell-bottom pants influenced by these celebrities in Western movies. They spread these fashions through ads and movies, we were influenced by them and we also change our fashion sense according to them. This is some sort of colonised mentality. This is a Western construction of knowledge through advertisement. (Mizan)

We look into the intent of these clothing brands, what they actually trying to achieve is to sell their products or they want to change their society in a positive way. That's the question we don't know. We don't know their motive. The economics of profit maximization theories explain that brands always try to sell things. I have a friend working in H&M. And I heard a bit about some of their strategies for selling products. For kids' clothing, you will see that those [Frozen-themed] clothes are available most when movies like Frozen are released. I will not say that those brands are promoting these clothes not for doing good for humanity, but you never know. (Zaman)

Mahfuz discussed the intent of these brands more openly and argued that the commodification of these gender-transgressive ideological forces emanates from growing pressures from the grass-roots level of society. He indicated that women's struggles have let these issues be considered important for society; the Swedish government recognised it by lending legitimacy and the brands have deemed it important, resulting in the commodification of gender-transgressive and egalitarian ideologies in the Swedish marketplace. He demonstrated ideological ossification by resisting gender-transgressive practices by brands.

It's not like they're doing this because they are suddenly enlightened by this—so this is how society works and we need to change this—it's more of a business decision. It helps a business to adopt these ideas, cater to these ideas, and grow its audience and customers. I think the pressure comes from the bottom up, women have been disadvantaged and we need to give women a level up to make it a more equitable society. The Swedish Government and Swedish culture allow freedom of expression and the more people talk about it, the more it becomes an important topic. Then the Swedish government upholds and recognizes that these problems are happening and this is how we need to change things. And the brands realize that if this is how society is evolving then we need to evolve in sync to stay relevant in the market and not let people off through stereotypes or basically perpetuate our existence in the market by jumping on the ship of gender fluidity before everyone else so that we can say we are the pioneers, we started these things. (Mahfuz)

Veresiu and Giesler (2018) posited market-mediated multiculturalism as a mode of neo-liberal governmentality that commodifies ethnic and immigrant consumers through four socialisation strategies. They argued that the state and the government in the political sphere place multi-culturalism and envision the ethnic consumer subject on the national agenda in the political sphere. This is followed by exemplifying the ethnic consumer subject as market researchers create the citizen type through studies and data collection. In the retail realm, the consumer subject is equipped by brands and through advertising and socialising consumers in the retailscapes. Finally, immigrants and majority inhabitants adopt ethnic subjectivities by embodying this commodification in their consumption choices. Likewise, the excerpt from Mahfuz also highlights how the Swedish government places the gender-transgressive consumer subject on the national agenda, followed by equipping in the marketplace as brands adopt the gender transgression set forth by the Swedish state, aided by neo-liberal governmentality.

Similarly, Mahfuz argued that brands only think about their profits in today's attention economy. He indicated that brands commodify these social issues to grab consumers' attention and cash on it. He particularly highlighted that young people today are focused on these social issues, and brands are capitalising to appeal to these consumers. He then indicated that market research is one of the reasons for brands to undertake such changes in their marketing with the emergence of gender-transgressive ideology. Once again, this can resonate with the exemplifying stage from Veresiu and Giesler (2018) in the market research realm.

Brands will do what's best for them in terms of long-term profitability. They will try to get a leg up and will live in the attention economy. Attention is basically money. So, if you can grab someone's attention if you can make a spot for yourself in someone's mind where all your competitors are also fighting for the attention of the same people. They take something that is trending, that people are talking about and show that you are doing something to make a change, and that's one way of aligning with a lot of people. This is a very youth-focused change that brands are taking because they understand that this new generation with Gen Y and Z, they are a lot more open than the baby boomers. They appreciate these changes. I understand where this is coming from. People get more choices and it allows brands to see purchasing patterns what sells and what doesn't, understand where society is changing, and finally produce things to represent people better. At the end of the day, of course, it all boils down to market research. (Mahfuz)

Mizan exemplified the capitalist commodification of gender-transgressive ideology from the West. He argued that ethnic groups can promote gender transgression by wearing clothes from their own culture. He indicated that the commodification of gender transgression should not be equated with improving the rights of alternative gender identities. He signposted that the gender-neutral and transgressive clothing currently promoted by the West only ossifies a Western gender ideology, which negates non-Western, more localised gender perspectives.

Let *Chakmas* [Ethnic tribe in Bangladesh], Arabs, Latins, and others wear their own clothes. Capitalist companies won't promote it because they want to dominate the market with their products. They're oppressing you to wear a suit-tie. Suit-tie isn't a bad outfit, but we shouldn't leave our traditional outfits. We all are influenced by Western-dominated knowledge. I think we need to promote outfits with respect existing to cultures and societies. Advertising should mirror the culture but nowadays advertising is constructing culture to spread their ideology through which they will be able to earn more and more money. ...We don't need to wear outfits like non-binary. Rather we need to ensure the rights of non-binaries. Showing equality through outfits, it is just publicity stunts that come from a capitalist mentality. (Mizan)

Advertising can reflect and construct social norms; hence, representations of these norms in advertisements can impact our individual and collective cultural identity construction, but can also be viewed as the consequence of changing socio-cultural practices (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). It is a "system of visual representation" that crafts meaning within the framework of culture and "reflects and contributes" to that very culture (Grau & Zotos, 2016, p. 763). Marketing communication influences consumer behaviour, proliferates gender discourses, and acts as a mirror reflecting contemporary social trends (Eisend, 2010; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004), such as the rise of gender fluidity, neutrality and inclusivity. Mizan highlighted the long-standing unresolved debate depicting two schools of thought: the 'Mirror' (Holbrook, 1987) versus the 'Mould' (Pollay, 1986; 1987) argument. This argument highlights the consequence or antecedent of advertising depicting gender roles/stereotypes. The 'mirror' argument underlines that advertising portrays the existing dominant values and cultural expectations of gender in society through a magnifying lens, like a reflection (Holbrook, 1987). In a contemporary consumer culture, marketing communication reinforces the dominant culture to normalise the way consumers view the world (Elyamany, 2018). Advertising content adapts to the changing social rules to correspond to the changing value system and promote a brand rather than challenging them (Eisend, 2010; Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014; Holbrook, 1987; Knoll, Eisend & Steinhagen, 2011). Conversely, the antithesis 'mould' argument claims that the depiction of gender roles in advertising shapes the beliefs and value system in society (Pollay, 1986; 1987). This argument is built on cultivation theory, which assumes that long and repeated exposure to media has a lasting effect that is cumulative and has the ability to alter values (Gerbner, 1998) and belief systems in society.

According to Zaman, men's and women's consumption are different and they should be allowed to choose what they want to consume, without creating a desire in men to consume feminine products such as lipsticks or nail polish. Zaman also posited that these brands only aim to 'manipulate the mass' by creating a form of hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1994) to transform their desire and dupe them to consume unnecessary products.



I'd say let them choose what they want to do. We don't need to promote. We don't need to advertise that men should have lipsticks or nail polish. I think in most of the cases what brands do is manipulate the mass mind to sell their products, there's no doubt about that. When you see the beauty products especially and their ads, and in most of the cases, it's inappropriate. It persuades people to buy unnecessary things. The ads also will convince you to believe in something that in real life does not actually work that way. (Zaman)

To some informants, like Zaman, this is simply an attempt to spectacularise representation of the marginalised, in effect, leading to commodification of the gender transgression. According to Chandler and Munday (2011, p. 403), spectacularisation can be defined as "the process of producing a representation in the form of a major spectacle". Gabriel (2008, p. 314) narrated that the emergence of spectacularism:

It was in the 1960s that the idea emerged of capitalism transforming itself from a society of material goods to a society of spectacle, from a mode of production of objects as commodities to a mode of production of images, desires, fantasies, and dreams as commodities.

In *Society of the Spectacle*, Debord (2021 [1967], p. 16) posited that:

In post-industrial societies where mass production and media predominate, life is presented as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly experienced has been replaced with its representation in the form of images.

Debord (2021 [1967]) discussed our cultural fetishism with representation owing to mass media and consumption, as commodification takes over. Representations in visuals, such as advertising, can be commodified by such spectacularisation (Venkatesh, 1992). According to Gabriel (2008), those spectacles, which can be produced in the forms of images and photographs, can engender new modes of resistance, as embodied by Zaman. Sandıkcı and Ger (2007, p. 206) posited that certain media representations can often generate spectacularisation.

The secular media's concern with the aesthetics of covering, which often takes the form of style bashing, fits into what is referred to as a "spectacularist" consumption orientation.

Porfido (2011) argued that *Queer as Folk*, UK's first gay television broadcast, showcased glamorous depictions of homosexuality leading to commodification of homosexuality in popular representational sphere, which was a cynical marketing tactic to allure the gay audience in a contested visual market rather than manifestations of homosexual visual and social enfranchisement. Following this line of thought, it can be argued that, to respondents like Zaman, gender transgressive advertising has similarly spectacularised and hyperbolised

representation of the disenfranchised. This leads to expressions of violence among consumers, especially the hegemony, who find misleading representation of gender non-binary individuals. Spectacularisation of gender can make some people feel like a form of domination has been inflicted on them (Crary, 1989). Thus, spectacularisation of gender transgression through propagation of gender-transgressive advertising can significantly influence mainstream perception of gender transgressive discourse.

Mizan highlighted that the commodification of gender-transgressive ideology is done through a neo-liberal system. He argued that the marketplace creates these new labels to promote their ideals and then commodifies them to spread their ideology. Similarly, Mahfuz also argued that brands promote gender fluidity in their commodification and communication merely to attract more consumers. Khaled, for instance, indicated that these brands, aided by neo-liberal systems, even employ other vulnerable groups, such as elder women, to serve their purpose.

I think they're promoting a neo-liberal economy. They want to spread their philosophy. See these genders didn't exist from the beginning of the world or even 100 years ago. Whenever something new evolves like this variety of genders, I think they create these terms for business purposes in a post-structural world. They push these kinds of terms to spread their business to create funds and to spread their ideology. (Mizan)

Of course, some brands would want to promote inclusivity, you know so they use a lot of gender-fluid people in their billboards, but I think it's not, that's also a business decision. They just want to you know promote themselves as a more accepting and more open brand, just to attract more customers, you know. (Mahfuz)

I remember seeing an ad by Kappahl I think, where an old woman was featured in an underwear ad, which was unusual. It made me think if even old women are used now to sell products. (Khaled)

Informants in this sub-section demonstrated their resistance towards gender-transgressive ideology with adversaries such as capitalism and neo-liberalism. Anti-capitalistic ideologies are at the heart of consumer resistance in most CCT scholarship (Ulver & Laurell, 2020). Reviewing previous literature, Ulver and Laurell (2020, p. 480) identified five ideological in consumer resistance literature—“capitalism and consumerism”, “imitation of Western capitalism”, “unethical conduct and misuse of capitalism”, “market inequality due to capitalistic principles” and “(social) liberalism and its politicization of the market”—all of which in one way or the other address the capitalistic and neo-liberal system as its antagonist. In this section, I also demonstrated how informants in this study also perceived capitalism and neo-liberalism as their ideological adversaries.

Samir argued that he would not like to buy a razor from Gillette that is pink or has floral elements in its design, because he associated those ideas with femininity. He uses the term 'Venus' to differentiate Venus as a feminine brand separated from the mother brand Gillette. Similarly, Shakib also argued that men's biological makeup, which instigated the growth of their beard, made the 'use of a razor' as a highly masculine territory. He once again brought in scientific evidence to corroborate his argument that although one can change their gender by adopting a different gender identity, one cannot change their biological needs.

Definitely, that's one of the things I wouldn't probably like to buy a razor that is pink that says Gillette Venus and there are a lot of flowers on it. (Samir)

You can change male genes, but they have [body] hair or growth of your beard that you cannot change. I mean Gillette is for men, it has a very specific purpose, scientifically it's needed for them. (Shakib)

Ostberg (2012) illustrated how men are re-appropriating traditionally female consumption practices to retain their sense of masculinity. Similarly, Avery (2012) discussed gender-bending in advertising and how consumers resist such contamination of their own and their brand's identity projects. She demonstrated how transgression from normative gender roles and expectations could engender conflict and fragmentation within a brand community. Avery (2012) showcased the ideological tension between male and female Porsche car owners. Similar to Gillette in this case, Porsche has historically been a traditionally masculine brand, serving primarily men. However, the launch of the Cayenne Porsche SUV targeted 'soccer moms', and consequently, a new community of female consumers entered the fray.

According to Avery (2012), the community of male brand consumers delineated themselves as the in-group, those who belong to the brand community, creating an outgroup ostracising feminine Porsche owners as outsiders to their community. For Porsche's brand community, only 'real men' could drive Porsche, as driving a Porsche is seen as a physical mastery and the drivers are viewed as strong, powerful and mechanically skilled, implying that men have been granted an exclusive right to drive. This is similar to how Shakib asserts that only men have the right to use Gillette. Women were, in that sense, perceived as illegitimate to drive Porsche and only permitted access to the community as passengers but not owners or drivers. Role congruency theory demonstrates that the Cayenne Porsche can be seen as a gender transgression of Porsche within its brand community (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). Similarly, in this case, women who use Venus are regarded as belonging to an outgroup because they have no legitimacy to use razors. Avery (2012) exemplified that owing to the politics and power imbalance in society, women's gender-bending consumption to men threatens men more than female-gendered brands targeting the opposite gender, triggering men's countervailing responses. Likewise, Samir here demonstrated his hyper-masculine behaviour to

negate Gillette's effort of gender transgression by clearly demarcating Venus from Gillette.

### **Commodification of Transgression at Odds with Inclusion**

Some respondents demonstrated their resistance against gender-transgressive ideology in the Swedish marketplace. When talking about Selfridges' agender clothing line, Anika highlighted that Selfridges is obliterating women's bodies in the name of agender clothing. She indicated that the female model in the image is flat-chested and short-haired to signify gender neutrality, but that impedes representations of feminine bodies. She argued that brands in neo-liberal marketplaces, which attempt to cash in with agender and gender-neutral issues, induce women to look like men. She also highlighted certain body image issues, such as the use of extremely thin and extremely masculine looks, which she presumes does not represent normalised femininity. Conversely, in regard to the more gender-neutral image by Zara, she identified how both models dressed in similar clothing but their bodily features helped her distinguish between the male and the female models, such as, for instance, the cuts of the pants are different for men and women. It can be interpreted that her normalisation of such images stems from a traditional patriarchal ideology, disseminated by the neoliberalised conception of genders that she has been used to seeing throughout her life. Scott (2005) indicated that feminism can often contest feminist ideologies or gender and sexual transgression.

So, they [Selfridges] are also to a certain extent diminishing how a female body is. If I now look into it, all of the girls are flat-chested, short-haired. Women's physiques and men's physiques are usually different, right? They're trying to force the women to look a bit like a man. By calling someone agender, they're using very specific types of models – extremely thin, extremely masculine body as well. When I see the Zara ad, I can see that it's actually a girl, even though they are dressed the same, it does not diminish the feature of women by trying to call it agender. The pant in the girl's dress-up that's a different cut than what the man is wearing. You also have to understand where I come from, I'm used to seeing stark differences in terms of clothing. So, this [Zara] for me is more normalised and blurred out from that perspective. (Anika)

Faria and Mafuz argued that all gender-neutral and agender advertisements merely place men's clothes on women. Faria highlighted bodily issues by arguing how men's and women's physiques are different. She criticised the capitalist marketplace that fails to take into account these bodily differences. Her patriarchal ideological orientation makes her perceive that the models do not look comfortable because of her normalised imageries of men and women. Men with long hair and women with

short hair, to her, mean that brands are transposing clothes to promote gender neutrality and transgression.

It was just men's clothing on a woman's body. You can't really ignore the fact that it's different for men and women, right? It would have been nice to recognise that and see them making some effort in changing the clothing a bit, like the same design but maybe the height and weight proportion. Here she doesn't look comfortable, and it shows. And it doesn't even look like a woman's body, I mean it's like they've put a woman's head on a man's body! They just have like long hair and they're saying that this is a woman, this is a man and now they're just swapping the clothes. (Faria)

A lot of gender-neutral clothing is basically men's clothing in the women's section. But then again, women for generations and generations have enjoyed wearing shirts or pants. It's probably not a lot of men who have thought about wearing skirts in public. You know women can wear traditionally masculine clothes and not have a problem being identified as a woman, we are used to seeing it. But then men, if they deviate from traditionally masculine clothes and start wearing skirts or clothes known to be more feminine, they will incite a lot of confusion. (Mahfuz)

Mahfuz also reverberated Faria's argument but indicated that women have been donning men's clothes for a long time—which has been normalised through the pervasiveness of the traditional patriarchal ideology—unlike men wearing clothes that are considered feminine, which can influence their masculinity. Mahfuz's final argument coincides with Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018), who also reverberated that men shown in women's clothing can engender attention. Klasson and Ulver (2015) investigated men's domestic foodwork to understand how Swedish men construct their gender identity concerning a conventional feminised activity and space. They showed how middle-class men masculinise domesticity with certain forms of social cooking practices without inflicting harm upon their status. This is also similar to what Holt and Thompson (2004) posited. Drawing from Klasson and Ulver (2015) and Avery (2012) it can be argued that to venture into feminist domains, men have to ensure that their masculinity is not compromised.

## Rigidifying Islamic & Resisting Transgressive Gender Ideologies

Some informants illustrated ideological ossification by demonstrating rigidity towards Islamic and resistance against transgressive gender ideologies by resisting the commodification of gender transgression in the marketplace and viewing it in the light of pollution in contrast to the purity of the religious beliefs and looking at such practices as the crossing of moral boundaries.

## Purity and Pollution

Our ideological beliefs structure our taken-for-granted meanings, symbolic conceptions and differences that consumers use to understand their consumption motivations and behaviour. While social structures and cultures change to fit societies and people, religion—a more entrenched part of a culture—is more deep-rooted and rarely evolves, which can lead to ideological ossification. While Sweden can be considered secular, Bangladesh is driven by Islamic ideals. Most Bangladeshi migrant respondents demonstrated that their values, beliefs and ideals about gender, imported from their home culture, are steeped in Islamic gender ideology.

Studying consumption, religion and ideologies, Izberk-Bilgin (2012) discussed the notion of infidel brands and consumer jihad. She highlighted how Islamist discourses of modesty, halal-haram and tyranny—embodying social equality, morality and justice—lead low-income Turkish consumers to perceive global—predominantly Western but also some local brands embodying Western values—brands as infidels. Looking at these Western brands as adversaries, these consumers engaged in a form of consumer jihad—a form of accommodation and resistance—vis-à-vis these brands, to remedy the morally flawed contemporary marketplace to bring back the glory of ideal ‘Golden Age’ Islam. This conflict between Islamic identity and either a more humanist Bengali identity or a more secular/Western cultural identity, results in questioning ‘purity’ of those who put their other identity before Islamism (Hussain, 2010). Let us take a look at an interview excerpt from Asif when he was discussing non-binary individuals.

No one in their right mind would want to choose their gender out of the binary. Hijras and soyboys [girlish boy] are bullied from their childhood and grow up with no social acceptance, are always laughed at by everyone [laughs uncomfortably]. And the parents also undergo mental agony as they believe this is God’s curse, and the relatives and neighbours believe the parents are sinful, either they have married cousins/relatives or they earn their living in immoral ways like taking bribes/corruption. One can only imagine the state of the minds of those children who grow up being always psychologically demeaned. (Asif)

The respondent talked about his reference points with non-binary individuals and how he identified them as dirty and profane. He used ‘God’s curse’ to emphasise their contamination and lack of purity and equated their *raison d’être* with morally and ethically wrong and sinful behaviour. It can be interpreted that the binary males/females are considered sacred creations of God, while on the contrary, non-binary individuals are considered dirty and profane. This goes back to the fundamentals of morality, as the binary genders are morally right because this is how God intended people to be and those outside the binary are often considered morally wrong. This can be understood by looking through the lens of pollution theory (Douglas, 2001 [1966]). As we can observe in this instance, because *hijras* are outside the socio-cultural system, they breed fear, anxiety and rage among

individuals such as Asif. They angered and were defiled by ‘God’, who has dominance over ‘the laws of nature’, and hence offends the cultural classification (Douglas, 2001 [1966], p. 3). According to Douglas (2001 [1966], p. 36, 39, 56), “dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter”, and hence, things can be dirty because they are “out of place”, “ambiguous”, “anomalous” or “imperfect members in their class”, just like the hijras in the socio-cultural system of Bangladesh in the eyes of Asif.

In CCT, scholars have discussed the notion of purity and sacredness vis-à-vis profanity and pollution (Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry Jr., 1989; Hirschman, 1988; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). Drawing a parallel between consumption and religion, Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry Jr. (1989) demonstrated how consumption can be used to manipulate the boundary between sacrality and profanity resulting from the secularisation of religion and sacralisation of the secular. They identified twelve properties of sacredness from previous literature<sup>21</sup>, defined domains of sacred consumption<sup>22</sup> and described the sacralisation process<sup>23</sup> and ways of maintaining sacredness<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, Asif exhibited how hijras are devoid of sacredness, demonstrating his ideological ossification by rigidifying Islamic and resisting transgressive gender ideologies. Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) also reported that consumers buy pre-packaged Thanksgiving meals from stores and appropriate them through rituals to commodify and symbolically sacralise them from the contamination of consumerist and capitalist connotations. Highlighting the complex interaction between religion and acculturation, Lindridge (2010) indicated that while for Hindu participants religion was merely one aspect of life, for Muslim participants it embodied their identity that they negotiated by conflicting anti-Western consumption narratives and acceptance of liberal facets of society.

Shakib demonstrated his ideological ossification by rigidifying Islamic and resisting transgressive gender ideologies, often palpable through marketplace manifestations. Shakib revealed his ideological ossification by stating how from a societal and religious perspective, one cannot and should not identify as a gender that one was not born with. In this case, he referred to transgender and gender non-binary individuals. He opposed the ideal of gender fluidity in Western cultures by stating that his ideology does not sanction individuals to go through a change in their gender identity. He further asserted that people’s clothing should also coincide with the gender that they are born with. This means that, in this case, he is also resisting

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<sup>21</sup> Hierophany, kratophany, opposition to the profane, contamination, sacrifice, commitment, objectification, ritual, myth, mystery, *communitas*, ecstasy and flow.

<sup>22</sup> Such as places, times, tangible and intangible things, persons and other beings, experiences.

<sup>23</sup> Through ritual, pilgrimage, quintessence, gift-giving, collecting, and inheritance.

<sup>24</sup> Separation of the sacred from the profane, performance of sustaining rituals, continuation through inheritance and tangibilised contamination.

brand gender-bending, gender-neutral and agender movements based on his viewpoint from an Islamic gender ideology—and thus gender transgression—as he found these as unacceptable. He further disclosed that brands with gender inclusivity messages in Western cultures have a tacit and implicit agenda that advocates being transgender or venturing outside the gender binary, which he considered harmful to society.

From a religious and societal perspective, we are still not at that stage where we can reverse male and female, using clothes or other things. So that will make things chaotic or weird for society. I mean there is a hidden message in these ads that you can change your gender, a hidden encouragement about being transgender, that is not good at all. (Shakib)

Shakib continued that such harmfulness can influence others, such as children in society. Talking about cosmetics and clothing marketplace manifestations, he highlighted how brands make them seem exotic and sensual. To him, advertisements that show women in their underwear, bikinis, or even short and skimpy dresses can be considered sexually explicit content. He associated this with movies with sexually explicit content, where parents can restrict their children from being exposed to it with Motion Picture Association (MPA) film rating system that classifies movies as rated<sup>25</sup>. He argued that advertisements that flaunt women in such clothing should be accompanied by a rating system to ensure that children are not exposed to ads showing women in revealing clothes. This, he posited, can have an adverse influence on the younger generation. This is in line with what Butler (2021) posited regarding the anti-gender counter-movement. She discussed how these right-wing groups protest that children are increasingly being brainwashed, pressured and recruited to change their gender and sexuality. She mentioned that one of the reasons for Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul convention in 2021 was to protect women and children from the demonic forces of gender.

Shakib also talked about advertisements on billboards and store displays in public spaces, where they openly flaunt women in revealing attire, which as he stated, can provoke children and alter their mentality and ideals as they would view women as sexual objects. He expressed his frustration that this sexualisation of women cannot be stopped in public places, but, however, kids can be banned to watch pornography. Hence, fundamentally, he paralleled such an erotic display of female bodies in marketplace manifestations with porn. This is similar to what Roberts (1998) stated about women at the beginning of consumer culture in Europe (see the subsection of 'A Chronicle of Gender and Consumption'). He wondered that although one could

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<sup>25</sup> For instance, PG-13 (parental guidance suggested, not for children under 13), R (restricted for those under 17, to be accompanied by an adult guardian) and NC-17 (not to be viewed by anyone under the age of 17).



think about this vulgarity and resist within, one can rarely stop these Western influences of the sexualisation of women. Zaman also echoed Shakib's sentiments.

It's like cosmetics ads, ads that show females wearing inner wears, like on a sea beach or something, they try to make it so exotic that I don't like. Because it's sexual content and children should not watch. There are no warnings like when you watch a movie, they warn you. Advertisements should be classified like whether it's 18+ or not. I felt like that shouldn't be [out] there, so vivid[ly] and for the kids and younger generation, it's not good, it may provoke them, it will change their mentality. They will think about women as sexual content. I mean you ban your kid to watch porn and everything, but then these super-shops they are putting those pictures, so big, blatant and open, in public places, and you think inside but you cannot do anything about it. (Shakib)

Some store displays here are more explicit. So yeah. Of course, they would cost some discomfort if I am with my parents or my child, maybe in the future. By explicit, I mean like some undergarments had advertisements in the shops. When you go by you see sometimes. (Zaman)

Talking about sexuality, Nabil also highlighted that his beliefs are structured from Islamic gender ideology, as he explained how society and religion prohibit the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people.

I think, as far as I have seen from my surroundings, that there is no place for gay or lesbians. Yes, for a guy, we always enjoy watching lesbian girls, because we get to see two girls at the same time, that's the fun part. And the gays, I think, they will be socially humiliated if two persons are caught doing something [laughs], which gay people do. So, it's not actually accepted in society or religion. (Nabil)

Reminiscing about his initial days in Sweden, Khaled indicated his difficulty to accept that individuals in the Swedish culture are more casual about their relationships, such as living together as a *sambo* without getting married or their acceptance of their parents getting re-married. He demonstrated Islamic gender ideology in this excerpt, as well as resistance towards a more transgressive one, by arguing that living together without getting married felt weird because it is considered a sin from his religious viewpoint.

I saw my classmates talking very casually about their stepfather, stepmother, or living together for thirty years without getting married and what are the factors that make them think it is not necessary to get married. Well, we are not here to judge of course, but at first, those things were shocking to me. (Khaled)

Samir indicated that he felt uncomfortable in the gym when he hit the shower. Because gyms usually do not have any doors, he is not allowed the privacy that he expects in a shower. He found it weird that males are expected to be uncovered in

front of other males, which, according to him, is completely normal in Sweden. In contrast, in the cultures he has previously been exposed to—Bangladesh and Saudi Arab—both dominated by Islamic values and norms, one is always expected to be covered and exposing oneself in front of others is seen as embarrassing and improper. By saying that he is not here to judge, Khaled indicated that he is in fact forming opinions based on Islamic gender ideology and resisting a more transgressive ideal.

I also feel uncomfortable when I'm out for a shower in the gym, and it's like a lot of males and gyms here don't have doors in showers for males and the same goes for females as well. That you shouldn't cover yourself if you are a male when you are around other males is not the way I was growing up in the environment. I don't feel comfortable, in front of any person regardless of gender, to be honest, haha. (Samir)

Respondents in this section demonstrated that their primary gender socialisation influences their ideological ossification, as they draw from the home cultural Islamic gender ideology and resist gender-transgressive ideology in making sense of their perspectives about gender while navigating the Swedish marketplace.

### **Resisting Commodification of Gender Transgression**

Responding to various gender-transgressive advertisements, Nabil and Samir exhibited their orientation towards their home cultural ideologies. They clearly demonstrated how their understanding of gender-transgressive portrayals in the marketplace are influenced by their ideological ossification. Nabil started with the Diesel advertisement and immediately presumed that because a girl is sporting shorter hair—which is normalised in Bangladesh as a masculine haircut—the model is a man. This was further exacerbated by the fact that both models were wearing the same gender-neutral clothes. When he realised that the two models depicted are two men in an embrace, he presumed that the models are depicting a friendship, instead of a romantic relationship, based on his Islamic gender ideal. However, he went on to mention that as soon as one realises that one of the models is a woman, one would not accept such a travesty because a woman and a man should not embrace like this and wear the same clothes and haircuts.

When I actually see this [Diesel] ad, I see brotherhood since the girl has short hair. The first thing people will notice is that two guys wear the same clothes, that they have some sort of friendship, but as soon as they figure that one is a female, the impression will become negative, because if a woman is portrayed in such a dress this is not normal, women should dress like women. (Nabil)

He asserted that women should dress the way that is acceptable in society. In her book *Purity and Danger*, cultural anthropologist Mary Douglas (2001 [1966]) posited the distinction between purity, sacred, or clean and pollution, impurity, or

danger. She argued that anything that is placed outside the symbolic ordered patterning of a cultural system is unclean and dirty. This, according to Nabil, was dirty, because it went beyond the social moral structure, informed by his religious values. He demonstrated his resistance against gender transgression by casting it as impure. A similar notion was also postulated by Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018), who argued that individuals are punished if they venture outside moral and sociocultural boundaries.

Nabil provided a similar response to the gender-neutral advertisement by H&M. Once again, he returned to the normalisation of the appearance of men and women in society. He is enraged because the woman is bald, something that he could only associate with men, whereas the man has long hair, something he thought men should not do. He deduced that the clothing also does not provide the right representation.

I think everyone is wrong about this advertising [H&M]. Because the guy has hair like a girl and the girl is bald like a guy. I would say what the fuck is this? This clothing is wrong! This is not giving the right picture or message at all. (Nabil)

He thought that Selfridges' agender clothing line also transposed the positions of men and women, reiterating that they should dress as their gender requires them to. His use of the word 'faggot' can be interpreted in a derogatory sense to indicate the man in the advertisement is gay because of the way he dressed up, illustrating the pervasiveness of his Islamic and resistance towards transgressive gender ideologies. It went beyond the bastions of the moral and cultural order (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018) that men occupy in society as dirt (Douglas, 2001 [1966]) or an anomaly.

Here [Selfridges' Agender] this guy is wearing a hat like a girl. The hat makes him look like a faggot! If there is no significant difference, then what's the point of making such a product? (Nabil)

Nabil and Samir discussed the advertisements featuring lipstick. Samir here clearly articulated that lipstick has been a traditionally feminine product and he has always seen it as such. Hence, the advertisement from Obsessive Compulsive Cosmetics was outside his frame of reference. He further added that lipstick is something women use to make themselves attractive, something that he found appealing. However, this not only conflicted with the Islamic gender ideology, but also quashed his appeal for those 'soft luscious lips'. Nabil, conversely, presumed that the androgynous model, James Charles, who is wearing lipstick, is a man because he was limited in his presupposition about the gender binary, also informed by his home cultural gender socialisation. He expressed his indignation about, what he thought is, a man wearing lipstick. He ended up stating that the person is suffering from an identity crisis because a man cannot sport lipstick, a traditionally feminised

domain of makeup. He added that the model is ‘attention-seeking’ in his loud and transgressive representation. In the *Fluide Beauty* advertisement, he identifies a transgender model as ‘gay’ because the model is wearing what he thought is a ‘tank top bra’, which can be associated with women.

The ad [Obsessive Compulsive Cosmetics] that you just showed me, the one with lipstick and a lot of facial hair, I found that really gross. I think traditionally I have always seen lipstick on female lips and always made me think like oh look at that lip, that's really appealing. But this was not, haha. (Samir)

I think this ad [Covergirl] is a wrong representation because a guy wearing lipstick is not socially right. I think he has an identity crisis. He is looking for some spotlight, he is an attention-seeking guy. Every person should belong to or represent a single gender. And in this picture [Fluide Beauty], this guy wearing lipstick and a tank top bra like a girl, I think he is gay and tries to look different and he gives a lot of effort in looking different, so I think that is wrong. I think he is trying to be someone he is not. (Nabil)

Nabil continued to talk about adhering to gender norms in society based on his ideological ossification. This time he labelled the man as a ‘lesbian’, showing his willingness to use another disparaging way to address someone who dares to venture outside the socio-cultural codes (Douglas, 2001 [1966]; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). He went as far as saying that the model had some form of facial reconstructive surgery because of the way the person appears and presents themselves. He equated the model with other cultural anomalies according to Nabil, such as someone wealthy who could afford to do things that make them different. He demonstrated his ideological ossification by clearly highlighting how this is a form of LGBTQ+ movement and gender-transgressive ideology that he knew exist, but did not subscribe to. His views are in line with anti-gender counter-movements that gender scholars (Butler, 2019; 2021; Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021) have discussed.

Because, in this picture [Maybelline], I think there is a guy and there is a girl, but the guy looks just like a girl I think, I mean I don't see the reason why people would act in this way. I think he is trying to be a lesbian, but he is a guy, and puts on a lot of makeup or maybe some cosmetic surgery. I think it's unnecessary, I think he has money, so that he can afford, he can do some things, which make him unique, maybe in his group, some LGBT shit and all. (Nabil)

Looking at a gender-bending advertisement, Nabil mistook Jaden Smith for a girl, because he was wearing a skirt. He refused to acknowledge that feminine attire, such as a skirt, could be worn by a man. He reiterated that this was unacceptable, wrong and incongruent with one's gender identity. He concluded that it can either be a troll or a marketing error because in his gender outlook, it was not just right.

N: And in this particular Louis Vuitton brand, no, I mean this girl...

I: [As we were discussing Louis Vuitton's advertising, I explained that] no, this is actually a guy.

N: Oh, I thought it's a girl. So, from a general perspective, anyone wearing clothes like that should be a girl.

I: This is Jaden Smith.

N: Jaden Smith or whomever this guy thinks he is...

I: He is Will Smith's son.

N: Oh right, so this is very unfortunate from Mr [Will] Smith! So, I think that this sort of dressing is total bullshit. And I don't see any reason for that.

I: Even David Beckham did an ad where he sported a skirt and he is a person who

N: represents masculinity. But I think Mr Beckham didn't have to do that, so is this kid. Because you can represent the way you are, you don't have to pretend that you are someone, I think it's just wrong. I don't see the necessity of it. So, by doing it, you lose your identity. For me, if I see a guy doing a model for Victoria's Secret, I will take that as either it's a troll or it's a marketing fuckup. (Nabil)

Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018) highlighted that in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, noblemen in the UK dressed in frilly accessories—such as wearing ruffs under their neck, adorned with ornamental brooches in their hats with upside-down brims, and knee-length puffy trousers—which would look absurd today because the cultural codes of masculinity and femininity have changed over time. Therefore, wearing skirts today can appear preposterous because of how masculine clothing is defined socio-culturally.

According to Mizan, products are only there to solve the functional needs of consumers. The only rationale for promoting lipstick or skirts to men, for Mizan, would be to sell more lipsticks or skirts, placing the culpability on the capitalist system. He iterated that the objective of these gender-transgressive marketplace communication is not to improve gender equality, but rather to increase gender-based discrimination by creating more genders. By instantiating that these Western brands would not promote hijabs—veiled clothes worn by some Muslim women—because that would be viewed as religious, Mizan emphasised that the underlying objective of capitalist brands is to sell products, despite the ideology it seems to promote. His resistance against the commodification of gender transgression is visible here.

Why I'm wearing this jacket or these jeans? Because I'm feeling cold. Why do I wear glasses? Because I've bad eyesight. So, tell me, why would I wear lipstick? Earlier only women used lipstick. Now they're promoting this so that both male and female

buy their products. So, all these gender issues are just their publicity stunts, if you go to the root of all these, you will find capitalism. The model in this ad is wearing a skirt. What is the aim? To influence people. See I don't wear a skirt. It's an agenda and weapon of capitalism and nothing else. I'm not sure what will happen if you wear a skirt. They don't work on gender equality rather they discriminate among the genders so that they may sell their products on a bigger scale. I think outfits have nothing to do with gender. Suppose a girl wears a hijab. So, tell me where will you place a hijab? If you promote a hijab through ads, one party will say that they are promoting a religion because they view a hijab as a religious dress. Capitalists don't have any religious or gender issues. (Mizan)

## **Crossing Moral Boundaries**

Some respondents maintained that certain moral boundaries should not be crossed. Talking about the Coca-Cola advertisement—where a mother, daughter and son, all three people in the family lust after a pool boy, where they all compete with each other, run through the house as fast as they can to offer the handsome pool boy the Coke first—informants indicated that there should be limits beyond which brands and the market should not go; otherwise, it might have an adverse impact on the LGBTQ+ community. The advertisement showcased elements of homosexuality. The informants in this case demonstrated their resistance against gender-transgressive ideology by rigidifying their Islamic gender ideology.

Samir indicated that brands should not cross certain barriers. The use of the same family is offensive to his ideals of family values. He mentioned that it was a sick attempt to use mothers and daughters, embodying his resistance against gender-transgressive ideology based on Islamic gender ideals. His use of the word 'sick' signifies deeper negative connotations that he cast upon such discourses. Interestingly, he picked up on mothers and daughters, whereas the son was also involved in the mix. Moreover, he underlined that it was not homosexuality that offended him, but rather the infringement of family values, a line brands should not cross.

I think there should be certain barriers, like mother and daughter competing for the same guy. That's very sick, kind of weird and I don't like that, if it was like friends doing that, I could accept it. There are certain barriers to what kids and parents can share. I wouldn't like to know what are the sex interests of my parents. They're promoting homosexuality here and there's a large community here. (Samir)

Similarly, Faria also argued that the brand attempted unnecessary sexualisation of the pool boy. She highlighted that if this was an advert for a beer, devoid of such values, she would have perhaps seen the point. However, she would not have accepted it because, like Samir, she also felt this was an encroachment on family values. Furthermore, akin to Samir, she advocated the ideals of the LGBTQ+ community by suggesting that the brand could have portrayed it in an alternative

way, which would not have impinged on her ideals. Likewise, Fahim also argued that brands that have family values should not focus on sexuality because it can influence children (Butler, 2021). Faria and Fahim, thus, exhibited their opposition against gender-transgressive ideology and resisting Islamic gender ideal.

Coca-Cola always comes with family and community values. Like during Eid and Christmas, you always see those cosy, happy memories. Here they are unnecessarily sexualising a pool boy. If it was a beer ad, I would have not understood, but I would have seen the point, but for Coke, I really don't see it. If they are really trying to address the LGBTQ community, they could show a father finally accepting his son after coming out and sharing a Coke, for example, I think, made it even more inclusive. This is bizarre. (Faria)

Coca-Cola is family oriented. So, they should be aware that their promotion should be free of sexuality. (Fahim)

Anika, on the contrary, indicated that the brand has not crossed any boundaries as there were no sexual innuendos in the commercial. She argued that family brands have long used humour as a way to 'soften the blow' on representing homosexuality, by degrading it. She posited that the brand has merely used 'playfulness' and there was nothing serious about it.

Using derogatory humour as a tactic to soften the blow of sexuality has been a very widely used tactic for most family brands. For example, in a lot of old TV or movies, you would see that homosexuality was actually seen as a butt of a joke. You don't need to accept it, just laugh at it. I think that's the tactic that Coca-Cola used. If it was very hardcore and serious, like, with high sexual innuendos, that would have been shocking. There was just this playfulness, there was nothing sexual or cringe-worthy about it. (Anika)

Samir reiterated that there should be certain boundaries but wondered where the brands should draw that line. He indicated that there are legal boundaries in his home culture in Bangladesh, where homosexuality is legally and morally shunned (Chaney, Sabur & Sahoo, 2020). In contrast, in Western cultures, he did not see that line. He indicated that proscribed relationships such as incest have become a recurring motif in pop culture, for instance, in television shows such as *The Game of Thrones*. He paralleled this with the pornographic industry, where he argued such forbidden relationships are depicted and just like how porn is prohibited in most societies, he would want brands to abide by certain regulations set by regulatory and moral authorities based on the context of that society. He drew upon his home cultural structural religious institutions in his resistance to gender-transgressive ideology.

In countries like Bangladesh homosexuality, that's a no no, it's not legal. There's a boundary. And in countries like, Sweden there's no boundary here. But where do you

think you should draw a line, it's hard to define. Can you just do whatever you want to do? Incest is, for example, trending in TV shows nowadays, like Game of Thrones. I'm not in charge of the whole society, but there are things that I cannot just accept. Like you see weird incestuous interactions between parents and children. The line would be different for every individual, society and religion, but you need to follow those guidelines. (Samir)

Overall, in this chapter on ideological ossification, informants demonstrated that they rigidified traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies and resisted egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Thus, their primary gender socialisation from their home culture has highly influenced their views about gender relations in the marketplace and consumption, as interpreted from their interview narratives. This rigidity to reorient their views and beliefs of gender signified an ossification of certain gender discourses, primarily from their home culture. Now, moving on from views about the marketplace and consumption, I would discuss a specific form of consumption practice, that participants in this mode engaged in.

## Temporal Consumption Practices

Based on their narratives, respondents engaging in ideological ossification, in their navigation of contesting gender ideologies, tend to inhabit more temporal or nostalgic consumption practices. Participants used temporal consumption practices to reminisce about their home cultural values, norms and practices as they found it difficult to get acquainted with their new environment. As they experienced ideological ossification, they became more geared towards their home cultural discourses that drive their consumption practices. Respondents often expressed their nostalgia for the past in their home culture (Peñaloza, 1994). According to Bardhi, Ostberg and Bengtsson (2010), when consumers visit another country, consumption of food can be used to evoke nostalgia by upholding a sense of home by separating themselves from the indigenous 'Others'. Studying acculturation of South Asian women in the UK, Lindridge, Hogg and Shah (2004) also demonstrated that the nostalgic memories from the home culture can be used as resources to resolve cognitive dissonance in their acculturation experience.

Anika highlighted that she now reminisced about traditions in her home culture, craving consumption that she never really appreciated back home. Anika shared that back in her home country she used to try out different cuisines for food consumption. But now, in Sweden, she went back in time by reminiscing about Bangladeshi food and ended up consuming food more attuned to her home culture. She believed that this could help her forge that connection with her home culture. Analogously, Hasan also recalled that his consumption of Bangladeshi food has increased even more in Sweden than it was in Bangladesh.



I mean before like when I was living in my country, I think I was more open to trying out different cuisines. I still am very open to trying out different cuisines, but I think there is a dimension of nostalgia that works and you start missing your own home food or you know, your culture food as well and that I think has crept up so that is what I try to do now, at least cook a lot of food from my culture, just to keep that connection with home. (Anika)

In Bangladesh, we used to have a wider variety of cuisines. I think somehow here we have more Bangladeshi food than we did back home. It's like we have become even more connected with everything Bangladeshi here. (Hasan)

Peñaloza (1994) illustrated how acculturating consumers maintain their connection with home culture. Similarly, Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) argued how some respondents create a hyperculture of their home, just like Anika and Hasan. Simultaneously, because Bangladeshi food is readily not available in the Swedish marketplace, Anika ended up cooking it herself, engaging in domestic activities in the traditional feminine domain. Hasan acknowledged that he has become more associated with his home culture and his consumption of Bangladeshi cultural elements has increased after coming to Sweden. He demonstrated a hyperculture, akin to Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), by becoming more Bangladeshi than Bangladeshis in Bangladesh, in effect consuming representations of the authenticity of his home culture to ensure cultural maintenance.

Faria and Samir illustrated how a temporal strategy can take you home, even if that is not one's home culture but one mediated by global consumer culture. She discussed how the launch of the streaming service Disney+ in Sweden brought back memories of her childhood. Interestingly, she talked about shows such as 'Lizzie McGuire' and 'That's so Raven', which can be ascertained as more feminine shows. Similarly, Samir stated that superhero movies or shows by Marvel Cinematic Universe on Disney+ or Netflix also helped him make up with his childhood. Notwithstanding this, they still reproduced their gender structures due to ideological ossification. Faria yearned for shows like Lizzie McGuire and That's so Raven, both American situational comedies, aired during the 2000s, led by female protagonists, particularly targeting female teen audiences. In contrast, Samir drooled upon superheroes, a hobby that is traditionally associated with males.

I was so excited about Disney; I actually bought a subscription before they came. I'm really happy, watching all the throwback shows, like *Lizzie McGuire*, *That's so Raven* etc. I'm really happy [laughing gleefully]. [Reminds me of] easier times, happier times. I love watching them. There was this Hindi show... (Faria)

I love Marvel, like *Black Panther* or *Punisher* or whatever Marvel is bringing. I like all superheroes. (Samir)

Hasan mentioned that his family visited South Asian and Bangladeshi grocery stores because they transported him back to his childhood. He articulated how ‘Potato Crackers’ chips was recently made available in a diasporic grocery store, which made him reminisce about his childhood consumption of this brand. He revealed that, although he is not fond of chips here, or even back in Bangladesh after he grew up, consuming that brand of chips here reminded him of those ‘happy’ days back home. He also boasted about how they have very delicious and flavourful mangoes in Bangladesh, which he could enjoy from this diasporic grocery store, as they import similar mangoes from India that gave him a quite similar taste. He compared this with the mangoes in Swedish stores that he found bland, once again indicating nostalgic and temporal consumption.

Recently, we found Potato Crackers there, like the ones we used to have when we were young. And we finally can have mangoes now, there are these Indian mangoes in Kött and Spices, which are far closer to the mangoes that we have than the bland ones you get here in ICA or Coop. (Hasan)

Consumer researchers have explored the role of nostalgia in consumption (Goulding, 2001; Holbrook, 1993), particularly in the context of consumer acculturation as a symbol of their home (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Bardhi, Askegaard & Arnould, 2001; Brunk, Visconti & Veresiu, 2013; Brunk, Giesler & Hartmann, 2017; Emontspool & Kjeldgaard, 2012; Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) and to provide them with material well-being (Bardhi, Ostberg & Bengtsson, 2010; Thompson & Tambyah, 1999). Studying nostalgic experiences through the consumption of history in an interactive British museum, Goulding (2001) identified two forms of nostalgic consumption: existential and aesthetic. She further argued how an individual’s role repertoire, current degree of their alienation and degree of social contact structure their nostalgic consumption.

In the context of multi-ethnic consumer acculturation, Emontspool and Kjeldgaard (2012) demonstrated the significance of nostalgia and how it is constructed in the new host cultural context. Studying cultural interactions and identity narratives of migrant consumers in multicultural Brussels, they found nostalgia as a major recurring motif in migrant consumer discourses. Their findings demonstrated that immigrant consumers develop various nostalgic discourses to either “re-appropriate food consumption objects from the expatriate and the global discourses as well as for mobilizing mundane products for nostalgic purposes” (p. 222) “or to appropriate global consumptionscapes through nostalgia for the routine” (p. 214). Thus, such appropriations of traditional representations of their home culture, which were not a part of consumers’ consumption routines, become a part of their narrative in the host culture. Emontspool and Kjeldgaard (2012, p. 215) highlighted nostalgic consumption narratives from their informants and argued that:

nostalgia is as much for mundane or exotic products from previous sites of residence as it is for marketed aspects of foods “typical” of home culture. Nostalgia is then not only a consumption discourse adopted by migrants to reflexively represent their culture of origin, but can also be the articulation of a longing for particular local instantiations of a more mundane glocal consumptionscape. Nostalgia hence becomes a particular emotional relation to discourses of globalization rather than only a longing for products of a particular origin.

However, Emontspool and Kjeldgaard (2012, p. 214) also posited that “migrants’ consumption discourses revolve more around disruptions of routines than around acculturation processes”. Such routinised practices and habits form a part of the respondents’ primary gender socialisation from Bangladesh.

Cruz and Buchanan-Oliver (2014) showed the role nostalgic food consumption can play in helping acculturating consumers cope with the emotional difficulty of being away from their home culture. Studying Turkish immigrants in France, Stamboli-Rodriguez and Visconti (2012) discussed four nostalgic consumption strategies that migrant consumers undertake in their acculturation process: shelter, tribute, solidarity and reculturation. They emphasised that migrant consumers typically engage in nostalgic consumption because they are discontented with their life in their new host culture due to isolation, negative stereotypes and marginality. They argued that nostalgic consumption, specifically of food, can construct a shelter to escape life in the host culture or it can act as a tribute to their home culture. This was demonstrated by respondents, such as Anika. Hirschman, Ruvio and Touzani (2011) argued that consumers often use holidays in dominant religious settings to evoke nationalistic nostalgia. They showcased that, during Christmas, Christians in Tunisia displayed nostalgic emotions of their home culture, reimagining Christmas in their prior life as a utopia due to a lack of similar spirited Christmas celebrations in Tunisia.

In this chapter, I presented how migrant participants from Bangladesh engaged in ideological ossification—which becomes very rigid in their practices and views—as they drew predominantly from their home cultural traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies and hence are heavily influenced by their primary gender socialisation, which is resistant to change. In the next chapter, I direct your attention to another mode of gender transculturation—ideological oscillation.

# Ideological Oscillation

This chapter presents how migrant consumers engage in what I phrase as ideological oscillation—the second mode of gender transculturation—in their navigation of conflicting gender ideologies to make sense of their acculturation experiences using resources and communication in the marketplace. Respondents in this mode mediated their ideological tensions through ideological oscillation when they demonstrated changes in their gendered beliefs and practices, discerned through their views about gender relations during the interviews. Outside marketing and consumer research, the concept of ‘ideological oscillation’ has been used by some scholars (Drell, 2000; Hirschman, 2002; Lieber, 2013; Žižek, 2005). Within consumer research, the notion of ‘oscillation’ has been employed in a few studies (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Molander, 2021; Schmitt, Brakus & Biraglia, 2022). Studying how consumers navigate conflicting gender ideologies in the Swedish marketplace, Molander (2021, p. 209) argued that her respondents “oscillated between intensive mothering’s safe but also inhibiting gendered stereotypes and double emancipation’s freer but also more unpredictable and threatening gender-neutral approach, creating a blend of both”. In this study, I view ideological oscillation as respondents vacillating between various gender ideologies, either blending by drawing from two different discourses, leaning on one discourse more than another, or without necessarily espousing a particular viewpoint.

These participants looked to find a balance in their gendered and consumption practices by blending various gender ideologies from their home and host cultures as well as the global consumer culture. Ideological oscillation is characterised by two important facets. First, it is about achieving a balance between competing practices, cultural objects, lifestyles, values and gender roles, blending conflicting ideological systems and discourses. Thus, respondents engaged in *retaining* traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies, while *reworking* egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Second, it is about change, meaning that it showcased how participants go through a reworking of their beliefs and views on gender relations in the new host culture, from their home cultural ones, after their acculturation. Molander (2021, p. 194) further highlighted “the interplay and tensions between ideology and everyday life” and indicated that “while traditional gender structures tend to run deep, they can change”. Ortiz (1995 [1940], p. 103) also highlighted that transculturation involves a production of a new culture that

“has something of both parents but is always different from each of them”. He also referred to this as a form of ‘neoculturation’.

During this mode of gender transculturation, informants started to adapt to the host culture. They understood the need to adapt to their new milieu, but some did it with a heavy heart. Respondents still maintained a strong connection with their home culture and appropriated cultural practices from their home in their host culture within their diaspora. However, they also started accepting cultural practices from their host country and started celebrating festivals from both cultures. They began to expand their vocabularies in Swedish and consumed offering more in line with the Swedish culture. One of the reasons for this was that it was easier and often necessary. Informants had to adapt to Swedish practices, such as drinking coffee because it was more readily available than tea or eating less Bangladeshi food because it was time-consuming to cook. Male respondents started participating in domestic work, which is traditionally feminine in Bangladesh.

This mode of gender transculturation can be paralleled with the ‘the best-of-both worlder integration’ identity position from the post-assimilationist acculturation model by Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005). They represented informants who are settled in their host culture and placed themselves between home and host cultures, living the best of both worlds. Thus, they were more receptive towards the consumption of both cultures, such as food and music. While this mode of gender transculturation can be best viewed as ‘the best-of-both-worlder’ in existing literature, it is different in that I focus on ideological navigation. Accordingly, respondents in this mode do not just pick and choose the best of both worlds; rather they navigated across a complex and contested discursive field. This mode of navigation can also be compared with the ‘the oscillating pendulum between cultures, assimilation and maintenance’ identity position from the model by Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), embodying respondents who experiences ‘alienations and attractions’ of the home and the host culture. Simultaneously, these respondents conversely contemplated that visiting their home culture would necessitate them to get involved in family obligations and be deprived of the consumption opportunities offered in the host culture. These informants typically demonstrated ambivalence about the romanticised account of immigrants by showcasing fragmentation and the contradiction of market freedom and social constraint in the host culture. This can also be paralleled with ‘the Danish cookie assimilation’ position from Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard’s (2005) model in the sense that it typifies the immigrants enchanted by the emancipation in the marketplace and potential of individual progression emblematic of the more developed host culture. Their respondents also demonstrated a craving for consumption, which is archetypal for those in this mode of navigation. Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) argued that discrimination from locals and ethnic border policing may deter respondents from this position.

Three outcomes from the post-assimilationist model by Peñaloza (1994) can be combined to correspond to this phase, namely ‘assimilation’, ‘maintenance’ and ‘segregation’. Informants in Peñaloza’s (1994) model assimilated with the host culture, which is indicative of the balance in oscillation. Peñaloza (1994) discussed how Mexican informants assimilated various goods and services from the consumer culture in the US, specifically those that were low involvement, high visibility, inexpensive and devoid of any language impediments. She identified how respondents maintained certain parts of their home culture, associated with the preservation of connections to their culture, for instance, food preparation and consumption, telephone conversations with families and friends back home and consumption of home cultural media and leisure activities, similar to informants at this mode of gender transculturation. She also highlighted how certain goods and services connected with the host culture were used in such ways that maintained connections to their home culture, just as informants in this study appropriated through a communal strategy. Informants in the resistance stage of the post-assimilationist model resisted the enticement of home and host cultures, such as the constriction of individual agency, which informants in this study also experienced. Peñaloza’s (1994) participants also were physically segregated from the mainstream of the home culture in various spaces such as marketplaces, neighbourhoods and households, akin to informants in this study going through ideological oscillation and engaging in collective resistance and consumption in diasporic spaces.

Üstüner and Holt (2007) discussed similar ideological tensions that can be used to juxtapose with ideological oscillation. Üstüner and Holt (2007) illustrated how poor migrant women from a village repurposed their rituals from their home cultures into the squatters of their urban host. For instance, they engaged in knitting clothes using wool during their leisure time and wore hand-knitted vests, sweaters and undergarments. In fact, those ‘mothers’ disclosed that they engaged in such activities more in the city squatters than they did in their village, indicating that home ideologies are reproduced even more intensively in the host culture than they did in their home culture before migration. They typically decommmodified the products in their city culture from their *Baticı* ideology and reinscribed them with their home cultural ideology. They pursued the dominant cultural ideology through practices of ritualised consumption. Üstüner and Holt (2007) also argued that, in the long run, some informants gave up pursuits of the dominant and minority ideologies and ended up with a ‘shattered identity project’. Daughters, in their study envisioned and romanticised the dominant host *Baticı* culture’s lifestyle and ideologies to become emancipated. However, the authors observed that eventually, the daughters have given up on their dreams and identity projects they fantasised about so often. In this study, while the respondents did not end up in a ‘shattered identity project’—since this research does not specifically look into identities—some ended up giving up on certain home cultural ideals to adapt towards their host cultural norms, out of sheer necessity for survival and convenience.

In her study of Romanian women in Italy, Chytкова (2011) demonstrated how some women engage in, what I interpret as, ‘oscillation’ through “enactment of both the gender position of the modern and the traditional woman” (p. 286). These women showcased ‘care’ for their own interests in their public sphere of work as well as ‘sacrificing’ their own interests, tastes and preferences in their private sphere at home to be ‘good women’ for their husbands (p. 287). Thus, they concurrently demonstrated a blending in their drawing of gender discourses from the traditional Romanian women and the Italian modern women. Likewise, respondents in this study have demonstrated that they navigate gender transculturation by drawing on patriarchal and transgressive or egalitarian gender discourses in their ideological navigation.

The rest of this chapter is structured in four parts. The first three sections demonstrate how respondents have navigated their ideological oscillation through retention and reworking. In the first section, it is shown that some participants have retained traditional patriarchal and reworked egalitarian gender discourses. The next section showcases that they have retained traditional patriarchal and reworked transgressive gender discourses. The third section presents that they have retained Islamic and reworked transgressive gender discourses. The last part of the chapter highlights how participants in this mode of gender transculturation engage in communal consumption as a part of their consumption practices in the host culture. Together informants in this mode of gender transculturation demonstrated how they navigate contesting gender ideologies finding a complex balance and a blend of various gender discourses.

## Retaining Patriarchal & Reworking Egalitarian Gender Ideologies

Some participants illustrated that ideological oscillation is expressed in their cultural views and beliefs about gender relations in consumption, marketplace communication and society, discerned through their interview narratives. In this section, informants demonstrated retention of traditional patriarchal and reworking of egalitarian gender discourses by striking a balanced gender outlook, being receptive towards a blended gender role performance and engaging in normative conformity to evade Othering. They particularly talked about various types of ‘balance’ and ‘change’ in their gendered beliefs and practices. However, some demonstrated that their primary gender socialisation could become malleable and open to change as they reworked and adopted new forms of gender norms, practices and ideals in their host culture. Nevertheless, some respondents demonstrated that the change to their gender socialisation is not as considerable as it appears to be.

## Striking a Balanced Gender Outlook

Ideological oscillation involves striking a balance between gender discourses while navigating various ideological tensions. Participants in this study have showcased that their gender transculturation involves an oscillation between various ideological discourses. Mahfuz, in the following excerpt, demonstrates ideological oscillation in his consumption practices as he exhibited blending and reworking of his views and beliefs. When he initially crossed borders and arrived in Sweden, he could not cook, which is considered a feminine skill (Klasson & Ulver, 2015), particularly in a patriarchal culture such as Bangladesh. Additionally, cooking Bangladeshi food is complex and requires an elaborate arrangement, also mentioned by Mehzabin later in this next section. He was also not well equipped with various ingredients required to prepare Bangladeshi food. Mahfuz gradually adapted to the Swedish culture by changing his practices. He has learnt how to cook his food, thereby illustrating a change in his gendered practice by venturing into the feminised domain of cooking. However, his action was out of necessity and survival, rather than an espousal of gender-egalitarian values (this is discussed in the final part of this section). Although he has learnt where to shop for ingredients and how to cook, he still did not cook a lot of Bangladeshi food because of inconvenience. He has, nevertheless, learnt to strike a balance in his ideological orientation oscillating between patriarchal and egalitarian gender ideologies by being receptive towards both. Mahfuz exemplified how respondents navigated through oscillation between patriarchal and egalitarian gender ideologies.

When I was right out of Bangladesh and I came to Sweden I didn't miss the food from Bangladesh. I made whatever I thought was convenient, Thai or Italian, that needs little preparation so that I can focus on just setting myself up. But then, as I figured out more, let's say spice shops, and I got better with cooking, I had absolutely no experience cooking ever, so my first experience learning to cook was when I landed in Sweden my first day, so that's when I actually learned to cut up a chicken. So, from there to now I would say it changed overtime because Bangladeshi or traditional subcontinental food is more complex, it needs more ingredients so my consumption over time increased in that category because of my expertise, preparation of those food and my knowledge of where I can go and buy them. (Mahfuz)

Zaman signposted that our primary gender socialisation influences our identification of gendered and consumption practices. He demonstrated oscillation by arguing that he is against gender stereotyping, hinting at his acceptance of gender-egalitarian ideology and distancing from traditional patriarchal ideals, but also by acknowledging that gendering in consumption is important, which implies his retention of traditional patriarchal ideology. He ended up stating that he would refrain from making any such consumption because of his socialisation into existing gender structures, once again highlighting his maintenance of the patriarchal ideology. Mahfuz, however, clearly stated that he does not consider gender in his



everyday practices or making consumption decisions, which is something he attributed to his acculturation in Sweden, indicating an acceptance of Swedish norms and values and a more egalitarian mindset. However, his acknowledgement that his identity is defined by his home cultural ideals demonstrates an oscillation between these ideologies.

It's also our brain that was shaped up in a way from what we see in our childhood that females always wear this. And that's how we define what is female and male clothes. But that doesn't necessarily have to be a standard always. I hate when people say that pink is the colour of females. I don't like or support the sexualisation of colour. In terms of clothes, I would never buy this because I'm not accustomed to it. (Zaman)

I think so little about gender in everyday life. Maybe it comes with living in Sweden. Let's say my own identity, for example, I purchase a lot of biriyani spices. My girlfriend used to say you buy an obscene number of spices until she tried it and she got hooked. So, it probably has more to do with identity, like where I come from, how I've grown up, what I like and not. But I don't think gender ever came to play when it comes to purchasing decisions. (Mahfuz)

Zaman acknowledged the importance of gender equality and advancing the feminist cause, while concurrently questioning the need for transgressing beyond the egalitarianism of the binary genders. He argued that brands promoting gender neutrality in their campaigns are overemphasising—or what I called 'spectacularisation' in the previous chapter—feminism and such aggrandisement needs to be played down. According to Zaman, gender-transgressive ideology—including gender non-binary and transgender issues—are nothing but feminist issues being embellished by these brands, rather than focusing on achieving gender equality. Nevertheless, he demonstrated oscillation as he upheld egalitarian gender ideals in this excerpt by advocating for equality, but also retaining his patriarchal orientation through his rejection of gender transgression.

For me, it feels like it's kind of over showcasing of feminism. You don't need to say I am gender neutral. You can say I am a male and still be a good human being and can believe in equal rights, feels like the way they expressed this gender neutralism it's more likely an exaggeration of showing solidarity to other genders or females. Naturally, you're different from females and you should accept that and it's not a crime or it's not a bad thing to say that I am a male. I'm different from females physically, but as a human we are same. So, we should have the same rights. (Zaman)

Mahfuz talked about how men and women do not necessarily have to perform their gender roles as socially constructed by socio-cultural structures. He indicated that our socialisation shapes our behaviour and practices, and hence, men can feel like women and perform traditional feminine behaviours and vice versa. This indicates his acceptance of gender-egalitarian ideology, against the enforced gendered

behaviour in society. However, he also discussed that confusion can be engendered by the proliferation of alternative gender identities, which can disrupt gendered practices, signposting his retention of traditional patriarchal ideology. His thoughts indicate an oscillation as he drew from these two gender discourses.

I think I have a lot of qualities that women have or are known to be feminine and I lack a lot of qualities that are known to be masculine. But I don't really find myself being confused about my gender based on my emotions. I don't think, for example, a man cannot feel motherly. I think a lot of behaviours we pick up are either by receiving them or by observing them. So, if a person has been around their own mothers where they've seen a lot of motherly care, even if he's biologically a male, and let's say he's very buff and ripped, very responsible and very decisive, things that are usually attributed to men, even then, that person can feel motherly. So, these definitions are basically behavioural or emotional patterns, you know how insensitive or sensitive someone is, how people react to things they have just been put into definitions. But since people are becoming more aware and accepting anybody can have literally any kind of emotion, it's hard to boil everything down to one word or a discrete identification. So, I wouldn't say that it's in a very good place because there's a lot of confusion. People themselves don't know where to belong. Sometimes you can come across someone and don't know whether it's how they would define themselves, whether they would like to be called a he or a she or a they. But it's lesser of two evils than to be forced into one of the moulds. (Mahfuz)

Mehzabin indicated that to achieve gender equality, it is not important to aim for equal representations everywhere. If a woman wanted to study male-dominated subjects, she should be allowed to do so, indicating her acceptance of gender equality. To Mehzabin, inclusion did not mean enforcing women into something they would not want to do, just to achieve a symbolic victory of gender equality. One can argue that our socialisation into these gendered subjects leads to more women willing to study subjects that are female dominated. Hence, this signposted her oscillation towards traditional patriarchal discourse. Nevertheless, she also acknowledged that true inclusion would mean there is no difference between gendered practices, such as having unisex toilets. Her perception of gender egalitarianism is about inclusion, rather than achieving equality in all societal spheres. Mehzabin demonstrated an oscillation as she blended patriarchal and egalitarian gender ideologies.

In most cases, men like to study math, science and engineering, on the other hand, women like to study subjects related to people. If a girl doesn't like to study science, she doesn't have to study science because we have to be gender inclusive and gender neutral, she should get the choice. She should have the right to make the choice. That should be the society we should aim for, not like pushing people to do something that they want to do because we want to be gender neutral, we want to have 50/50 in everything, that's not necessary. Like they have unisex toilets, I think that's a really good thing. It doesn't have to be different toilets for men and women. They have to

know that some girls have periods and yeah there are pads in the dustbin, and that's the way it is, accept each other and be inclusive. (Mehzabin)

## **Receptive Towards a Balanced Gender Role Performance**

Informants illustrated how they adopted an outlook on gender roles that balances ideologies from Sweden and Bangladesh. Shakib talked about how he participated in household activities in Sweden—similar to Mahfuz earlier—something he had never done back in Bangladesh. While buying groceries is not traditionally feminine in Bangladesh, doing laundry and household work is framed as feminine gender roles in Bangladesh. Shakib demonstrated a more balanced gender role performance by blending a traditional patriarchal and a more egalitarian gender ideology.

I have some household works, I have to buy groceries, I have to do laundry. (Shakib)

Anika, however, discussed gender roles more directly. In her view, gender roles in Bangladesh are very distinctly demarcated. She described the patriarchal ideals by explaining how men are expected to bring home the bacon and protect the family from any variabilities and uncertainties, whereas the women are expected to look after the children and parents and manage the household, adopting a more 'nurturing role' (Chytкова, 2011). These roles remain unchanged even if the woman earns, as she would still be expected to come back home afterwards and put on that nurturer hat, performing dual roles. In contrast, she thinks the gender roles in Sweden are quite different as men participate and are equally involved in household activities and child rearing. According to Anika, in Sweden, men adopt a dual role of being the protector and the caregiver, just like women in Bangladesh. Similar to Ostberg (2012) and Klasson and Ulver (2015), she described that men in Sweden venture into traditionally feminised domains.

In Bangladesh, I think, there's a very traditional and clear role in a home, what the woman should do and what the man should do. The men are supposed to be the provider, bring in the money, be more or less the protector of the family, whilst the women cook and take care of the home, children and parents, a lot more nurturing role. Even if women are working, they need to take a dual role of being the provider and the caregiver in family, it's very rare in Bangladesh that men actually help out in the house. However, in Sweden I have actually noticed that there are no clearly defined roles, it's quite greyed out, as men help out in household work and share responsibilities. Men are much more involved in the children's lives in terms of taking care of them, being not only the provider but also the nurturer. (Anika)

Anika claimed that she was surprised to find that the men she knows in Sweden, referring to her colleagues, feed and put their children to bed, in essence, performing the 'nurturer' role that she talked about. This is akin to participants in the study by Chytкова (2011), whose respondents also embodied a 'caring' role, although in this

context, Anika talked about men. Anika juxtaposed this with Bangladeshi norms, where women are expected to come home early from work, if they work, to perform household duties. She perceived that gender role performance in Sweden is much more equal, as men and women work as equals, as partners. She found that men in Sweden did not appear to feel superior and perceive household work as beneath them. She relished the opportunity to find that balance in gender role performance in Sweden, where men venture into traditionally feminised domains. Thus, she demonstrated an embracing of gender-egalitarian ideology. However, her use of the word 'surprised' can be interpreted as that while her gender ideals are malleable, she still oscillated, to some extent, towards patriarchal ideals.

I've seen a lot of my colleagues going back home, for example, after a full day of work, cooking dinner for their children, making sure that children eat and then tuck in, while the wife is still working. I don't think that I will ever see that in Bangladesh. They have that sense of superiority, that it, sort of, falls beneath my framework of what makes them a man. It's actually expected that the women come home earlier and then cook. It was quite surprising for me how they are seen as equals, work as companions, act as partners, instead of having different roles in a relationship, rather than having that sense of superiority. (Anika)

Studying heterosexual middle-class men in Sweden venturing into domestic cooking and foodwork, a traditionally feminine domain of consumption, Klasson and Ulver (2015) illustrated how these men constructed their gender identities. They identified three forms of masculinities: resistant, instrumental and feminised. Through their work, Klasson and Ulver (2015) demonstrated how young Swedish men integrate egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies into their cooking activities by masculinising a feminine domain, in effect oscillating ideological tensions. Similarly, Ostberg (2012) showcased how men are re-enacting consumption practices from traditionally feminine into masculine ones. While Anika maintained her feminised spaces at home, she also enjoyed the opportunity to integrate men in her life by enabling them to enter feminised consumption spaces by balancing and oscillating ideological conflicts within her.

In a similar vein, Anika and Samir talked about fatherhood in Sweden. Anika explained how an advertisement in Sweden, where she observed a man performing domestic roles in a kitchen and taking care of the children, had made her reconsider her views of fatherhood. She underscored the emphasis on motherhood in traditionally patriarchal societies, while fatherhood often goes ignored, indicating her embracing of an egalitarian gender ideology. Furthermore, when Samir initially encountered a different version of fatherhood in Sweden, it helped him balance his gender role expectations. He explained how fathers in Sweden carry their children and travel with them as well, which is different from what he has observed in Bangladesh or Saudi Arabia.

There was an ad where I saw the man working in a kitchen with something, helping out the kids and everything, with something some crisis happening and I think that sort of made me rethink parenting, the role of a father, made me re-evaluate how men should be more involved as a caregiver in a child's life. We put so much emphasis on motherhood, but not on fatherhood. (Anika)

I saw fathers travelling with their kids alone keeping kids in, I don't know what you call them, kind of like a backpack where they put the kid in with the straps. That's something I don't see in Bangladesh or Riyadh. It's always the mother that is around the kids if the kid is outside. The common belief is that mothers can take care of the kids in a better way than a father can. But here it's not the case. The kid's mom can go to work and since you are on parental leave you can take care of the kid 24x7. (Samir)

Samir argued that mothers are presumed to be better caregivers in societies dominated by traditional patriarchal ideology. However, in Sweden, the gender-neutral paid parental leave policy allows fathers to also take care of their children without inhibiting the mother's career (Government Offices of Sweden, 2019). Similar to Anika and Samir, Sarah also talked about how she found a balanced gender role performance in Sweden when she gave birth to her daughter after marrying a Swede. She stressed that she only consumes those diapers—and she found most diapers are—which are marketed using male models. She further added that she enjoys that men take a more balanced role in child rearing and other domestic—traditionally feminine—practices in Sweden. In all these instances, Anika, Samir and Sarah oscillated between a traditional patriarchal ideology they have been indoctrinated in and a more egalitarian gender ideology found in Sweden.

It is a very gender-neutral country. The thing that I noticed most, in 80% of diapers, I only see the father's face. I loved that. I rarely saw any females in diaper ads [in Bangladesh]. And I only buy those diapers with a father's face in it. Even in diaper-changing stations, it is full of fathers. I like that. Most of baby products and carriers, ads are full of men. This I absolutely love about Sweden. And I see fathers pushing strollers on the roads. Little things like household chores are not the sole responsibility of women but both genders. (Sarah)

Scholars in CCT have demonstrated how Swedish fatherhood diverges from the marketplace ideals (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019). Molander (2021) explored Swedish single fathers and how they navigate contesting ideological tensions between the state-induced 'dual emancipation' and the traditional gendered 'intense mothering' in the marketplace, which can be interpreted as patriarchal traditional and egalitarian gender ideologies in the context of this study. She identified four approaches: a traditional one that is safe but also limiting, a progressive approach that offers new safe terrain with flexibility, a domesticated approach with tensions but that also attracts them and a self-interested one resisting self-sacrifice and fitting everything

in. However, Molander (2021, p. 206) also indicated how these household chores are not necessarily so egalitarian in Sweden after all:

Despite the fact that Sweden has worked on these issues since the 1970s, the never-ending low-status domestic chores still seemed to frustrate the Swedish fathers... Indeed, Swedish statistics show that activities like cleaning, laundry and doing the dishes are still considered “women’s work”. While women have cut down on these types of activities significantly over the years, men have not increased their involvement.

Molander, Östberg and Kleppe (2019) talked about the Swedish caring father in 1974 and the everyday father in 2015. They highlighted that in 1974, as a part of their promoting gender egalitarianism, the Swedish state introduced the gender-neutral paid parental leave and featured Swedish heavyweight weightlifter Lennart ‘Hoa-Hoa’ Dahlgren, sporting Swedish colours and symbols, holding a baby in his arms and smiling. The use of a highly masculine model helped reinforce their message and demonstrated that Hoa-Hoa maintained his masculinity. Molander, Östberg and Kleppe (2019) also showcased the ‘everyday father’ in Sweden by following an award-winning photo project *Swedish Dads* by the photographer John Bävman. The series featured portraits of 45 stay-at-home fathers to understand the how fathers experienced the most generous paid parental leave policy in the world. The imageries exemplified involved parenthood, using everyday fathers, rather than highly masculine fathers. Analysing the same visuals, the same authors conducted another study where they positioned this state-induced fatherhood ideals vis-à-vis the traditional gendered fatherhood depicted in contemporary ‘Western’ advertising, media and pop culture. They demonstrated ‘the involved father’ as a new revolutionary fatherhood ideal, who engages with everyday chores, interacts and plays with the children and demonstrates tenderness and intimate caring. This resembles what Samir, Anika and Sarah narrated about Swedish fathers accompanying their children outside and taking care of them as well. Hence, such egalitarian gender norms have been experienced by these respondents in their every life and marketplace interactions.

Samir also talked about how having a kid influences the career of a female more than a male. He understood that the Swedish system allows a generous plan of paternity leave for fathers, leaving the mother to be flexible. He, nevertheless, talked about how having a child would always impact a mother, her career, and her physical and mental health. While he stressed the importance of planned parenthood and stated that this is not fair for the mother in any way, he outlined that this is the gender structure we live in. He demonstrated a blend of traditional gender ideology and a more equal gender ideology that he adopted from the Swedish culture.

No matter how much you say having kids doesn't affect your career, it does, it's like a full-time job. In Sweden, it's much better because a father can also take parental

leave. That's one of the really good things. But planning is essential. Me and my wife are always talking about how she should take a break when she should feel comfortable, when in her career she is in a position to do that. Being a male, I'm not really thinking about it, if I'm going to have a kid next year then what about my career or the pressures on my health or depression level. It's an advantage. It's definitely not fair. But the system is like that. I can plan when I'm gonna take my leave to spend time with my kid. (Samir)

Mizan juxtaposed his life and one of his female cousins' life in rural Bangladesh. He explained that she was discriminated by her father, whereas he was accorded more privilege in education and other aspects of life. However, he also highlighted that his values have changed over time from patriarchal gender ideals in rural Bangladesh. He indicated that his wife is more privileged in terms of less gender discrimination because of his change in values. It can be interpreted that Mizan has developed an enhanced understanding of gender egalitarianism in Sweden that enabled him to reflect on such comparisons, but his underlying makeup of patriarchal ideology remained dominant.

My father was a farmer but his thoughts were very developed. He sent us to good teachers doesn't matter how far they are. We both brothers studied at the public university. My uncle never did it for my cousin sister. She didn't get as many opportunities as I had. I always got new textbooks but she used to get second-hand books. My parents bought test papers for me, which were costly. They never bought test paper books for *apa* [elder sister], she had to share with me. I think that's discrimination in terms of education. *Apa* couldn't go to watch movies. There were restrictions upon her. On the other hand, I had no restrictions. I was admitted to a good college, and she was admitted to the college nearby. At that time our social structure was like that, it was male dominated. Nowadays the scenario has changed, my wife is a graduate of the University of Dhaka. She wants to do a job. I've no restriction on her from my side. I think they had the mentality that girls will get married and they can't help in family matters. (Mizan)

Shakib depicted that gender structures in the rural areas of Bangladesh are even more deeply entrenched than in urban Dhaka, which privileges women to a greater extent. He mentioned that although his mother prioritised him and his brothers over his sisters, his father treated them all equally. He indicated that his male cousins in the village had always been more privileged than his female cousins, who were deprived of education and conceded into early marriages, becoming devoid of agency in their personal lives, moving from their parents' homes to their husbands'. His reflection revealed that his own views have moved to some extent towards gender egalitarianism, indicating an oscillation. Khaled signified his adaptation to Swedish gender equality by arguing that he believed in a more balanced gender role at home and stressed the importance of proliferating these practices in daily life.

I feel that my mother always had some inclinations towards me and my brothers more than my sister. And my father, he was supportive of my sister, he looked towards my sister the same way as he did to me or my brothers. I have cousins that live in village and they are kind of deprived, my male cousins always get priority from their parents, my female cousins, they didn't even get education and they married pretty early, during their teens. I saw both cultural bias in city life and also the discrimination towards women is greater in the village. (Shakib)

Just because I am a man, doesn't mean I will work and my wife will clean the house or I can't take care of the baby. These are small things we discuss today in civil society. I think we should not just limit this discussion in society but ensure we live these in our personal life. (Khaled)

Respondents often navigated through oscillation, by moving back and forth between their home cultural and host cultural ideologies. In this case, their oscillation is about moving fluidly between cultural norms and practices. The two following excerpts are from different parts of Hasan's interview. In the first quote, he talked about how he enjoys the quality of his life in his host culture. He ruminated about his life here far away from the influences and intrusion of his parents, relatives and neighbours because it is challenging to enjoy a private life in Bangladesh, away from all the meddling of so many family members, friends and acquaintances. He highlighted that women in Bangladesh intend to gossip, which is a very gendered stereotype. Furthermore, although Hasan does not generally feel homesick living in Sweden, he occasionally, in periodic intervals, feels yearning to go home. In Sweden with more gender egalitarianism, he had to involve himself in domestic chores—such as cleaning, washing and cooking—whereas in Bangladesh, with less equal gender ideology, it can be interpreted that he expected the women in his life to take over the work, so that he could enjoy life, like in a retreat and get back to Sweden rejuvenated. This is similar to respondents of Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005, p. 166) experiencing “retreat from the perceived mechanistic strictures of the market-mediated Danish world through repeated physical border crossing...to recharge their batteries”.

I like living here, so I don't really feel homesick. You get to live your life without your parents, aunts, female neighbours interfering in and gossiping about your life. You don't have to be scared of sleeping in to miss the *Jumma*<sup>26</sup> prayers. When I do feel homesick, I just go home and enjoy the perks of life in Dhaka. But I haven't been home in quite a while now, with COVID and whatnot. So, like right now I really miss the comfort of home, you know, when I don't have to do any work—you know like here, cleaning and washing to help my wife—and have my food served every day. It's a proper vacation. (Hasan)

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<sup>26</sup> *Jumma* prayers are mid-day prayers on Fridays, attended by most men in the mosque because Friday is a weekend in Bangladesh.



Studying everyday consumption experiences of men, Thompson and Holt (2004) illustrated how men perform ‘gender tourism’ by sometimes visiting feminine spaces and adapting feminine practices as a reinvigorating retreat, knowing that they can return to their hegemonic masculine positions with their symbolic patriarchal passport. In a different way, Hasan engaged in a different form of ‘gender tourism’ by visiting his old domain of masculine practices as a reinvigorating retreat before returning back to his host cultural, and newly normalised, more egalitarian gender discursive position. Here, Hasan oscillated between a patriarchal gender ideology from Bangladesh—where he gets to have the comfort of not engaging in housework—and a more gender-egalitarian ideology in Sweden, where he reasoned that he has to help his wife and share the work.

### **Normative Conformity to Evade ‘Othering’**

Participants have described that they wanted to blend-in and conform to normative structures to avoid ‘Othering’. This notion of evading racial ‘Othering’ is well established within gender and post-colonial studies and has permeated into CCT (e.g., Hobbs & Rice, 2018; Miyake, 2022). “Othering refers to the social and/or psychological ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group” and “the various ways in which colonial discourse produces its subjects” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013, p. 188). Indian-American feminist and post-colonialist scholar Spivak (1985) introduced the concept of ‘Othering’ to explicate the imperial discourses perpetuated by the colonisers to view the colonised—or immigrants from the Global South—in a subordinate way. Similarly, Bhabha (1983) also postulated the notion of ‘Otherness’. However, delving into the post-colonialist literature is outside the scope of this study.

Some informants demonstrated that they have adopted the Swedish lifestyle, attempting to showcase their distancing from home cultural beliefs and practices, incongruent with host cultural norms. However, it can be interpreted from their narratives that such changes have mostly been for convenience and survival in their new cultural context. Their pursuit of this lifestyle has less to do with a change in their values, norms and ideals about gender as they *disengage* their own beliefs and views about gender from their adoption of new cultural norms and practices, as interpreted from their narratives. Previous studies within marketing and consumer research have explored the notion of normative conformity to gain group acceptance (Cherrier & Gurrieri, 2013; Holliday & Cairnie, 2007; Lascu & Zinkhan, 1999). While CCT studies have shown that consumers shape marketplace narratives to “fit their life circumstances rather than feel a pressure to conform to a specific ideological representation” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 875), in this instance participants conformed to those normative pressures of displaying tolerance and acceptance of their host cultural gender discourses. This understanding of normative conformity has not been found in previous consumer acculturation literature.

Mehzabin demonstrated how she oscillated in her choices while navigating various ideological tensions. Being married to a Swede, she balanced and oscillated between various gender discourses from her home and host cultures, which also happened to be her husband's culture. While she adopted Swedish practices such as eating healthier and eating early dinner, she still occupied feminised spaces such as cooking and grocery shopping, more attuned to traditional patriarchal ideology, despite having a Swedish husband. Similar to Mahuz at the beginning of this section, Mehzabin also explained that she does not prefer cooking Bangladeshi food, but only because it is time-consuming to do so without any help in the kitchen, which is more readily available in Bangladesh from other women, such as female family members or domestic help. She mentioned that she only started cooking here in Sweden after getting married, which indicates that she has also reproduced patriarchal gender norms from her home culture that necessitates women to be the ones conducting domestic activities. Moreover, she rejected eating bacon not because it is *haram* in her religion, but because it is an unhealthy eating choice—as the neo-liberal practice of eating healthy is more popular in her host culture than in her home culture—once again indicating how she related to Swedish culture at times and Bangladeshi culture at other times.

Cooking Bangladeshi food takes a lot of time, so I don't cook it that much, maybe like lentil curry, which doesn't take that much time. Planning to cook beef tomorrow after three months. I started to like cooking, when I met my husband. I love cooking now but I didn't before I met him. I try to eat now as healthy as possible. I make the cooking and buying decisions, but I try to shift towards more vegetables, from once to now thrice, we try to avoid red meat and processed food. I don't remember when I ate bacon last time. I cook every day, four portions for dinner and lunch the next day. Recently, I have started intermittent fasting, I eat dinner at 5 and then I have nothing until the breakfast next day, it's like 14 hours. (Mehzabin)

Mehzabin's case can be paralleled, to a very small degree, to the daughters '5 years later' in the case of Üstüner and Holt (2007), because she—similar to others in this sub-section—has also, to some extent, given up pursuing a certain ideological inducement and ended up in an assimilative project. Similarly, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991) demonstrated that consumers routinely consume premade and store-bought food for Thanksgiving meals owing to a lack of time or cooking skills. This indicates that convenience and necessity drive some of these respondents towards changing their (gendered) practices and accepting cultural objects and practices of their host culture. However, it can also be argued that some acceptance does not indicate that the respondents are internalising their host cultural gender discourses.

Conversely, Faria talked about how it is a norm in Bangladeshi households to put the interests of the male members of the family ahead of the female members. Nevertheless, she argued that this should not be perceived in a discriminatory sense, but rather that they are 'taking a step back' by prioritising male members of the

family in everyday acts and practices. By upholding the patriarchal gender structures and underplaying the hegemonic masculinity privilege with a narrative of ‘sacrifice’ by women, Faria disconnects gender views from her practices by *de-gendering* the practice. In essence, she overlooks how deep patriarchal gender structures run within her. This suggests an oscillation between a patriarchal and a more egalitarian gender discourse.

There is this common tendency of putting the male member of your family ahead. But I think they never really made it look like a privilege to the male people, more like we the woman of the family are taking a step back or pushing them forward. (Faria)

In a similar vein, in her study of Romanian women in Italy, Chytкова (2011) postulated that the “traditional gender role structured by the dominant discourses in the home culture centres on the notion of self-sacrifice and passive endurance, which is in ideological conflict with the individualism and active self-help that define the marketplace representation of the modern woman” (p. 271). The Romanian “society was dominated by traditional patriarchal values and gender roles with women being attributed the role of mothers and home-makers: subordinate and submissive to men and always ready to sacrifice for the family and occasionally for the country” (p. 272). Thus, “a woman was expected to sacrifice her personal aspirations and well-being to the higher cause of the well-being of others: either the family or the community at large” (p. 274). Hence, the notion of self-sacrifice has been one of the core components of these acculturating women’s identities. In the above excerpt, Faria also demonstrated such an outlook in her beliefs and views by arguing how women are selflessly taking a step back and putting other ‘male’ family members forward. She disconnects this from gender by arguing that this is not a male privilege but a woman’s prerogative.

Sarah discussed her acculturation experience when she moved from Bangladesh during the summer. She reminisced that her husband, who is a Swede, was the one in charge of the domestic space because she could not work due to the requirement of learning new skills and difficulty in adjusting to a new culture. She mentioned that this was faster than her husband teaching her how to vacuum and do laundry, which she never did in Bangladesh. It can be construed that in Bangladesh, the use of a vacuum cleaner or a laundry machine to clean and wash is still very limited as most of these household chores are done by domestic help in middle-class families like hers. However, as she gradually learned these domestic chores and adjusted to the Swedish way of life, she started to contribute to her household work.

Coming from Bangladesh, and I was pregnant for 5 months. In Bangladesh, I used to use a car or rickshaw to travel, there is AC everywhere. when I came here it was the hottest summer. Just walking to the nearest bus stop, I felt like I will die of heatstroke. My husband used to do every household work. It was because there is limited time,

and he had to go to work. So, he used to do everything because that was faster than teaching me to do something. I didn't do any single work. After one and a half years, I learnt how to vacuum or laundry. I used to compare myself with all the women around me. I used to observe girls here doing so many things, carrying a stroller, walking a dog, or grocery shopping under the stroller. They were like super women and I couldn't do anything. So, my confidence was very low at that time. He did everything and it was hard for me, I couldn't contribute, I almost had a mental breakdown. It took me some time to cope. As my daughter grew up and I got habituated, also the body needs to learn to work after thirty years of travelling by car and rickshaw, it takes time. Now I know pregnancy was not the issue, it was the adjustment. Now I do household work. We don't have any helping hand in this country, like maids or drivers, so people are bound to do their own work. And I feel that it's great. (Sarah)

Sarah's account demonstrating more gender equality in her household also illustrates that she did not partake in household activities because of her difficulty in acclimatising to the Swedish way of life and that her lack of participation had nothing to do with gender ideologies she subscribed to. Thus, she refrained from drawing on any particular gender discourse in this instance. However, she also compared herself to Swedish women performing so many activities, showing an affinity towards and admiration of the gender-egalitarian ideology, but also indicated how she is the one engaging in all household chores, signposting an oscillation towards patriarchal norms.

In the following tête-à-tête, conversing about in which situations or contexts he experiences that his gender is present, Fahim indicated that men consume differently than women because of social structures and norms. He traced the responsibility towards brands and marketing who convince women to consume more beauty products to maintain their appearance. He did not inculcate the social structures that produce these gender norms, but instead attribute it to 'going with the flow'. To Fahim—as indicated earlier and also later in this book—it is all about nonchalantly blending in and adopting the prevailing norms. Thus, Fahim indicated that his gendered practices are different from those of his beliefs. In gendering consumption, he retained his patriarchal orientation, but also became receptive to gender-egalitarian ideology to conform to normative pressures in the host culture.

F: In food consumption, men are always inclined to have meaty items whereas women are more circumspect about their diet. They prefer healthy diets which usually include fewer meaty items. In cosmetics, women outperform men by consuming endless cosmetic products.

I: Why do you think that?

F: Because the cosmetic industry is advocating the idea that women need to be pretty and careful about their beauty. A woman needs more products to maintain herself. I

myself do shopping twice or thrice a year while my girlfriend is used to shopping every week. Still, that's not enough for her.

I: So, are you saying it's about social pressure?

F: No, I might say it's all about going with the flow. (Fahim)

During the interview Hasan talked about his experiences of working in Sweden. He reiterated again that he related to and relished his new host culture. He mentioned the positivity in the workplace compared to his home country. Concurrently and contrarily, he also underlined the challenges of working in Sweden. He explained how it was easier for him to connect with his colleagues in Bangladesh than in Sweden because he understands the culture and context better.

I enjoy working here, the work environment has a really positive vibe, you don't feel that hierarchy here, people are nice, and you know, people don't objectify women here in the workplace, so it's all good. But, to be honest, it's difficult to connect with Swedes like you can with a Bangladeshi. And you have to be always cautious with all the political correctness, so that you don't end up saying something offensive that you will regret. Like women here, even Bangladeshis, wear more revealing clothes than what I am used to, which is a sight for sore eyes! And it's great for women, feeling freer. But you also have to be careful to not look at them in a way they feel uncomfortable. So, I guess I feel more freedom but also confined. (Hasan)

On the one hand, Hasan related to the egalitarian gender ideology in Sweden and indicated how women are not treated as objects in Sweden, as opposed to in Bangladesh. He argued that it is more liberatory for women, including Bangladeshi women, to not feel oppressed and dress as they want, not being mandated to cover themselves as a patriarchal society dictates. However, on the other hand, he also associated himself with traditional patriarchal ideals, distancing himself from the political correctness in Sweden. He took pleasure in how women in Sweden—including Bangladeshi women—dress up in a less conservative way than in Bangladesh, signifying his objectification of women to some extent. He narrated how he always had to be vigilant and politically correct in making sure that he did not look at women in an objectifying way and be attentive so that he did not make any derogatory or questionable remarks. Hasan's views indicate that he feels attached to patriarchal and egalitarian gender ideologies, oscillating between them.

When prompted with images of MQ and Louis Vuitton featuring men wearing skirts, Samir highlighted that it would not be okay for guys to wear skirts because he thought it was unacceptable for them to wear clothes not assigned to their gender, particularly in the corporate environment (the GQ advertisement showed a man wearing a skirt in an office). However, he also wanted to appear politically correct by stating that he was not engaging in 'body shaming', but rather the formal environment was the issue. He stressed that he accepted this as 'natural', but

concurrently identified how weird it is to see men exposing their 'hairy legs'. Engaging in normative conformity, it can be argued that Samir attempted to glamorise his words amidst the fear of being humiliated if he was deemed politically incorrect. His reluctance to express his opinions about how odd it is for men to flaunt their hairy legs was concealed behind the veneer of *identity politics*. He was espousing gender transgression by reworking his ideology to conform to normative expectations in Sweden. Fahim, conversely, directly stated that if men in Sweden start wearing feminine clothing and that is socially accepted as a norm, he would also be happy to wear skirts, indicating his willingness to imitate for normative conformity.

I think it's clearly saying to me that this is okay for girls and for guys, it's not. I think girls wearing skirts is very common, we've seen this everywhere. Guys wearing skirts, maybe in Scotland, but not in my culture. I wouldn't really appreciate someone showing a lot of hairy legs that way in a very formal environment. And I'm not doing body shaming, because they're male and this is natural. I think there are certain codes in a formal environment that we should stick to. (Samir)

[If] it can be promoted that men can wear skirts in [a] public place, in that situation, I wouldn't hesitate to buy and wear a skirt in public places and workplace. So, the whole scenario depends on the efforts of the government and media regarding how actively they are promoting this ideal. (Fahim)

These informants oscillated between various gender discourses from their host, home and global consumer culture by imitating Swedish ideals for normative conformity, which can be construed as *political correctness*. Fisher (2004, p. 111) argued that issues of acculturation and identity politics are inextricably entwined:

Intertwined in complex ways with issues of identity, multiculturalism has sometimes been framed as the most recent layer or permutation in the ongoing discourse of identity politics, where notions of cultural identities, citizenship, nation and nationality, community, not to mention a variety of theories of difference, contribute to this picture of how identities are constructed and negotiated.

Political correctness theory/movement is a form of cultural politics where people attempt to engage in politics focusing on representations, values and identities (Fairclough, 2003). Gender-transgressive advertising is a means for brands attempting to become more politically correct to appeal to young peoples' representations, values and identities. Hence, there is an increased focus in politics to achieve social and political change through change in culture and language (Fairclough, 2003). However, despite these liberal movements, there has been an increase in counter-movements, such as anti-feminist and anti-gay sentiments against the democratic ones, which are increasingly visible in social media (Ulver & Laurell, 2020). According to co-optation theory, it can be argued that as feminism

and LGBTQ+ movements are becoming more accepted in society, i.e., being co-opted, there are tendencies of countervailing responses from the hegemonic mass.

Although people with right-wing mindsets like to refer to identity politics, nowadays the new left-liberal wing also uses identity politics as part of their individualism (Chua, 2018). Consumer lifestyle about gender transgression interacts with the mother categories and reproduces new discursive positions in the marketplace. One possible explanation of why marketers are increasingly deviating from traditional gendered communication is their willingness to make a political statement. Brands nowadays are taking a stance and openly expressing their views, despite the risk of alienating a significant group of potential and current consumers. Knudsen and Kuever (2015, p. 171) noted how the children's toys market has become a "moral battlefield where consumers stake out positions on the feminisation and sexualisation of young girls, forcing companies to take strong ideological stances while competing for market share". This indicates that in today's marketing, brands are increasingly attempting to stay relevant and take a public stance on political issues.

Faisal argued that consumer opinions today are far-reaching and not powerless anymore, as they can stand up to brands. This has led brands to be more sensitive and politically correct to resonate with consumers, playing it 'safe'. Faisal also highlighted that brands want to steer clear of activists and prevent presenting themselves in a negative light. Consumer activism has led brands to be more cautious as they are scared of creating communication that might bite back. Celebrities and influencers driving this gender-transgressive movement (McNabb, 2018) have become more relatable to the mass through social media. Faisal posited that brands are merely attempting to be politically correct by taking advantage of consumers' identity politics. This goes in line with Gopaldas (2014) because there are activists ready to challenge the marketplace, whereas corporations are simply ensuring that they adhere to marketplace sentiments.

Brands are trying to be politically correct, because if they show something that would create a bias from a responsible brand, subsequently there are LGBT rights activists, social activists and feminists who would be talking about it. So, brands are just playing safe these days and they are trying to be right. Of course, there have been debates and discussions regarding Axe's ad, which is being taught in say five universities as a bad example – that look Axe has done this. (Faisal)

In an introduction to a special journal issue, Thompson (2014, p. S155) cogently articulated how identity work is an important keystone in identity politics and how such politics is inextricably entwined with our consumption practices, power relations and gender structures:

Consumers deploy a gamut of marketplace resources to construct personal and collective identities that, in many cases, challenge social stigmas and limitations that

emanate from ascribed categories of gender, class, ethnicity, religiosity, and nationality. And at this point, consumer identity work becomes a mode of identity politics. The term “identity politics” is most closely associated with the second wave feminist movement of the 1960s and its clarion call of the personal is the political, an aphorism which asserted that gender- based inequities of political power and socioeconomic opportunity were routinely manifested in conventional social roles, norms, mores, and status quo expectations (Bristor and Fischer 1993). Thus, challenges to and subversions of the conventional gender order were seen as a means of disrupting broader power structures.

In this section, participants demonstrated that their gender beliefs and views comprise a blend of patriarchal and egalitarian gender ideologies, as they drew from their home and host cultural gender discourses at varying degrees, which is evident in their narratives about gender relations. While some showcased a balance and change in their gender norms, values and practices, for others it can be interpreted that their change in gender socialisation was out of necessity and convenience in their life in Sweden, and thus, their beliefs and ideals about gender remained unchanged. Hence, I argue that these informants’ practices and adoption of host cultural gender norms did not have anything to do with their beliefs and views, indicating fragmentation and disconnection between these two.

## Retaining Patriarchal & Reworking Transgressive Gender Ideology

Some informants illustrated ideological oscillation by demonstrating retention of traditional patriarchal and reworking of transgressive gender discourses by distancing themselves from discursive debates, vacillating between gender discourses and inclusion as expressions of only ideologies of a certain group.

### **Distancing Self from Discursive Debates**

Respondents often attempted to distance themselves from ideological debates in terms of gender. While they maintained that they supported gender-transgressive practices, they also concurrently indicated that their views and orientations were in line with their patriarchal views from home, in effect demonstrating an oscillation.

Samir, who initially grew up in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and later in Dhaka, Bangladesh, mentioned that he would be willing to sport gender-neutral clothing. However, only because he perceives those clothing, such as t-shirts, as very masculine. This showcases that Samir bends, reworks and co-opts gender transgression to his existing patriarchal gender perspective. Simultaneously, this also highlights that gender-neutral clothing can be perceived as men’s clothing, a



critique that various androgynous fashion brands—such as Zara for their ‘Ungendered’ collection—received. It can, therefore, be interpreted that such agender products are not really gender-free but privilege forms of masculinity in an emerging social gender order (Connell, 2005). On the one hand, Samir articulated his intent that one should be able to express and perform their gender, whereas on the other hand, he cast doubts over his own intent by stating that one should also, on the contrary, think about alternative gender identities, such as transgender and gender non-binary individuals. If one should be able to embrace one’s own gender identity, that should include alternate gender identities and not just cisgender individuals. It can be interpreted that Samir essentially excluded other gender identities when he talked about embracing and consuming based on one’s own gender. Thus, he demonstrated an oscillation between patriarchal and transgressive gender ideologies.

I'll be willing to wear unisex because it is very masculine. I wouldn't say it's bad to embrace your own gender and go shopping that represents your gender. But then thinking about the other categories, transgender community and others, we should also be really thinking about them as well and how they feel inclusive, like integrated into the community in the shopping scenario, and maybe the brands are trying to do something for them. I'm not really sure how this is helping. But if they get consumers, I don't see any issue. (Samir)

Samir went on to highlight that we should think about making these marginalised individuals feel included and integrated within our communities. He questioned the motivations of big brands and the capitalist powers behind them. Samir, in this case, demonstrated an oscillation by drawing from patriarchal and transgressive gender ideologies by concurrently discussing the importance of embracing his masculinity as well as the importance of including alternative gender ideologies. He distanced himself from any particular ideological debates and positioned his practices as removed from any gender discourses. He also stated that if brands are engaging in gender-transgressive marketing to help these disenfranchised consumers, he has no qualms about it. Importantly, he did not really see how these images and communication can actually help these communities. Once again, Samir indicated that he did not espouse a particular gender discourse for the consumption of clothing, but instead left it to the market.

While discussing gender-neutral clothing, Fahim described how his views and beliefs are in line with Swedish cultural values. However, he also indicated that he might be convinced to consume gender-neutral clothing to be worn at home in the private sphere, but he would not want to adorn himself in these clothes outside in the public sphere because these are still not well accepted in society. He clearly posited that his consumption of clothing is influenced not by gender but by social acceptance and normative conformity. His decision to consume these at home and not in front of others indicates that he was unwilling to challenge socio-cultural

norms about gender and retained his patriarchal orientation. It can be argued that he has disengaged gender from his consumption decisions of these gendered objects. It is also reflected by his claim that he uses his gender when making decisions about the consumption of clothes. However, his oscillation is demonstrated by his openness to try out androgynous clothing in the domestic space. Similarly, for Zaman, clothing is about comfort, and he did not think that gendered discourses influence such consumption. He distanced himself from any gender ideologies.

My values are quite in the same line as Swedish values. I am open towards any kind of dress and community. But the question is would I buy these clothes? These unisex clothing intrigued me, and I would buy the skirts only for wearing at home, not for outdoor activities. Some of these dresses seem not very masculine, but are still common, so I may buy and wear these now. But I think I wouldn't be able to wear these kinds of clothing until these are trendy. It's not my belief, rather I would say the reaction of society affects my perception about what cloths should I wear or not. I see no gender issue here. ...When it comes to clothing, my gender is the primary criteria. In retail clothing shops, I have to go to the men's section. (Fahim)

For me clothing is about comfort. Whoever can wear whatever they like as long as they are comfortable. I have no problem with it. (Zaman)

In the first excerpt below, Samir argued that brands engaging in gender-transgressive advertising attempt to influence men to do makeup not to advance a social issue, but rather because it is a capitalistic agenda to advance their profit motives. However, if a brand, conversely, is truly engaged in advancing a social issue to help men burdened by normative social ideals, then he would truly support this activism by brands. Samir here clearly demonstrated his ideological oscillation by drawing from patriarchal and transgressive gender discourses and simultaneously, detaching himself from any ideological debates in his thoughts about the consumption and communication of gender-transgressive marketing. In the second excerpt, looking at the image of Thinx's period-proof underwear for transgender men, Samir reiterated that if the image serves to advance transgender rights, then he is all for it; otherwise, he thinks this is a capitalist agenda to take advantage of a social issue. This demonstrates his lack of commitment to a certain ideological orientation. Thus, while he supported gender transgression, his distrust of the market and the ideals of gender transgression indicated his oscillation.

So, if a brand is doing this to maximise their revenue thinking that males are gonna be influenced to do makeup, I'm not really supporting that. If a brand is thinking okay this is for people who feel alone, who feel like they are not a male, even though they have a male body but they feel like they're actually a female, to help them, then I don't have any complaints. So, it depends on the why they're doing this. (Samir)

If trans men get periods then kudos to the brand. They took an excellent step to solve a real-life problem for a certain community. If not, if this is just to create hype to sell more, I'm not a big fan of that. (Samir)

Khaled, Mehzabin and Zaman, in the following quotes, indicated that due to their primary gender socialisation in patriarchal ideology, they are not accustomed to seeing men wearing products such as lipsticks, skirts, makeup, or transparent clothes, typically associated with femininity in their viewpoint. Such sexualised representation of men—such as male models donning transparent clothes—was received poorly by Khaled. This is similar to what Jones, Stanaland and Gelb (1998) found in their study. Nevertheless, these respondents distanced themselves from their gendered beliefs by claiming that they can accept this transgressive behaviour as long as these individuals are comfortable, signposting their receptivity towards gender-transgressive ideals. Zaman specifically stated that he would not personally put on gender-neutral clothing, but it has nothing to do with his ideological orientation, but with unfamiliarity due to different gender socialisation. Khaled, Mehzabin and Zaman are, in essence, removing themselves from any ideological debates about gender, as they oscillate between patriarchal and transgressive gender ideologies.

I have never seen a man, let alone one who has a beard, wearing lipstick. I can't actually relate to it. I am not sure what is the agenda here. It's a little bit difficult to say how he looks because I am used to seeing women in transparent clothing, not men. This is weird if I think about it, but looks okay. (Khaled)

Like I said, it's weird because I'm not used to seeing guys wearing skirts or makeup, but if he wants to wear skirts if he is comfortable and if he thinks that that's the way you want to dress up, then why not? (Mehzabin)

I am liberal. I think anyone is free to do whatever they want to do unless it harms someone. In that sense, all of this looks okay to me. If clothing brands promote it, and if consumers are convinced, it's totally up to them. But if you ask me if I would buy this, personally I would say no, mostly because I'm not accustomed to that. I would not feel comfortable with that. So, it's not because of some kind of ideology or something that is preventing me from doing these, it's just because I'm not habituated. (Zaman)

In the previous excerpt, Samir expressed his support towards advocating for disenfranchised communities if brands truly promote androgyny for this reason. However, he oscillated from that initial ideological position and went on to claim that he did not support men doing makeup, signifying his drawing from patriarchal gender discourse. Although he specified that he is not offended, his narrative dictated otherwise as he claimed to not consume products that promote gender transgression because it conflicted with his ideologies. Once again, Samir

demonstrated that he drew from these two gender discourses, without specifically adhering to any, and detached himself from such debates.

I can see this more as a service towards that community. And from this perspective, I think that's fine. If you can sell it, if people are buying, you know, what you can do. From my perspective, there's nothing to be offended here. I'm not the buyer of Cover Girl or the magazine and I won't buy it. A male doing makeup is a 'no' for me. I never thought about doing that and don't know why I would. If you really want to do that, go ahead. I'm not gonna stop you. But yeah, personally, I'm not a big fan. I would not like to see all men doing makeup from tomorrow and in offices and schools. I'm not offended here. I just don't care about it. (Samir)

Mehedi's early gender socialisation was heavily influenced by patriarchal gender ideology and an aversion towards gender transgression. However, after his acculturation, he underwent a 'transformation', enabling him to learn more about gender roles and transgression. Similar to Samir, Mehedi's consumption is not contingent on the gender or sexuality of the models promoting the product, but rather the quality of the product is what influences his consumption decisions. Hence, he essentially reworked his understanding of gender transgressive ideology, but also distanced himself from any discursive gender positions, engaging in oscillation.

When I was working with the UN, I met a group of homosexual boys, I felt weird. I was like ewww one boy is sexually attracted to another! It felt odd back then. I used to think homosexuality is a form of mental illness. I didn't find it natural. ...Society teaches us gender roles. I have learnt a lot about gender and gender roles, I have developed this sense after coming abroad. This transformation helped me understand it better. ...If these sweaters are available in different colours, I will definitely buy these. [Now] it doesn't matter to me that two gay or trans people are models of these sweaters. Product matters to me. If I like the product, I will buy it. As a consumer whatever I like I will buy. (Mehedi)

## **Vacillating Between Gender Discourses**

Some respondents discussed how they are more tolerant towards gender transgression as a part of their adaptation of Swedish values and norms. However, they have maintained that their acceptance is limited to what did not influence them personally. Therefore, they would not be receptive towards gender transgression in their personal lives and draw from patriarchal discourse. They illustrated an oscillation in terms of blending these two gender discourses and a certain level of rework in their gender outlook by being more open towards gender transgression within a certain context. In a narrative style, I used a series of excerpts from Anika and Mehabin's interviews to illustrate this.

Discussing men using makeup, Anika argued that she would be uncomfortable with her husband putting on makeup, although she has no qualms about watching images of other men engaged in grooming. She was well aware of her biases and knew that she was influenced by the global media landscape. She maintained that it was challenging for her to accept metro sexuality (Tuncay, 2006; Tuncay & Otnes, 2008a; 2008b), but due to Western and gender-transgressive images and videos, this has normalised. She discussed how she was influenced by Western and local cultural classics in her childhood, reading about heroes who were handsome, rugged, strong and very masculine, protecting their vulnerable heroines, without any traces of metro sexuality. She identified the reproduction of gendered roles within the confines of the literature where men were not concerned about their looks and their attire, but women took their time to dress up and groom themselves for their heroes. This indicated her orientation towards traditional patriarchal ideals.

I don't think I would want my partner to do makeup. If other men are doing makeup, I'm not judging but I'm not too sure if I'm fully comfortable with it. I think I'm influenced by biases, the image of how a man should be. It took me quite a bit of time to also accept metro sexuality, that they take care of their skin and themselves, but I think that is normalised now. When I was growing up, I've always read about heroes who were basically extremely rugged and didn't care about the world, not taking care of themselves. They were just protective of the girls they were responsible for. Men there had a very distinct role. They talked about women dressing up, making up, whilst men took just five minutes, not bothered by how they looked. (Anika)

Suddenly, a realisation dawned on her. Anika recognised that the reason she has a normalised image of men doing makeup, but not wanting her partner to follow suit, was because she felt okay with Western men engaging in grooming, while it would not suit her husband, a brown man from Bangladesh, or any other South Asian men. Interestingly, she only talked about men from her family, and no other brown-skinned men, because she could only relate to those men she is related to, making it difficult for her to imagine them in makeup.

Actually, now that I think about it, I think I'm okay with Western men doing makeup. I don't think I'm still comfortable if I see a brown-skinned man doing makeup. I think it's a lot of relating to the men. It's fine to me if a man is wearing lipstick on TV, but I don't want my brother or husband or son to do that. (Anika)

Then she vacillated once again, changing her stance about brown-skinned men donning makeup. She recalled that she had a cross-dressing friend, an ex-colleague, who donned skirts and makeup at parties. We can observe the constant tensions she is going through here, attempting to navigate between various gender discourses she drew from. She argued that she never considered him a brown man because her friend was gay, and hence, she viewed him in a feminine light, negating his masculinity. However, she still would not be able to accept her husband putting on

makeup. She found the fissures in her reasoning, wondering about the contradictions and tensions going through her mind. Then she recollected about another friend, an elder brother of a close friend, who also dressed up as a woman, and she personally applied makeup to him. With the same reasoning, she also drew attention to his feminine features and body language and excluded him from being a brown 'man'. She mentioned that her friend went through oppression and harassment, but she never really considered their sexuality or gender transgression.

Now that I think of it, I actually have a very good friend, whom I used to work with, who is a brown man, who dresses up as a woman wearing skirts in parties, wearing makeup. Now, this is another contradiction in my head, wait. So, I actually had no issues with accepting it. I don't know why I said I would not be okay with a brown man. Probably because the guy I'm talking about was gay and I actually accepted the feminine aspects of him. Whilst if my husband would have been doing the same, I probably would not have been okay with it. This was very interesting for me because now I'm taking back the fact that I'm not okay with a brown man doing makeup. I actually have a friend's elder brother who also dressed up as a woman and wore makeup, even I applied makeup on him. He also does not stand out to me because of his feminine body language and sexuality. I knew that he was bullied because of his choices but it did not even stand out to me. (Anika)

Then Anika once again changed her views and posited that she might be receptive towards her husband donning makeup, but could not make up her mind because of the conflicts within her, as she drew from various distinct gender discourses. She again referred to how she is attracted to men with masculine features—showcasing her drawing from patriarchal gender discourse—who has to be rugged, brooding, mysterious and smart, not concerned about his appearances, just like her romantic novels from her childhood imaginaries. Based on her reasoning, she reached a conclusion that she viewed homosexual, cross-dressing, well-groomed men as non-masculine. She stressed that although she would not be sexually attracted towards these men, she would be more than happy to have them in her life as friends, as they have been, denoting her inclination towards gender-transgressive ideals. However, she maintained that she would still not prefer to have her own husband doing makeup but struggled to find a rationalisation for this contesting ideological conflict.

Maybe I would accept it. This is a contradiction. Men that attract me have to be rugged, brooding, mysterious, with extremely high intelligence. For me, the appearance itself doesn't matter, that they need to be really well built, very clean, or something. Then I basically see my friends as women. I know that I'll never be attracted to them, but I don't mind being friends with them. So maybe to some extent I do accept it. I think I would judge my partner. I don't think there's a rational explanation for this contradiction. (Anika)

To help her rationalise, I contended that people often normalise homosexual relationships by symbolising one partner as very masculine and the other as very feminine. Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018, p. 191) referred to this as “the documented coexistence of ‘typically masculine’ and ‘typically feminine’ behaviours in some gay men—what Kates defines as ‘gender (in)flexibility’ (2002)”. This helped her to traverse her thoughts, as she concurred and even dished out examples of how lesbian relationships often feature one woman with masculine and the other with very feminine features. It can be argued from her conclusion that her primary gender socialisation—emanating from home cultural as well as transcultural discourses—has influenced her gendered views and beliefs, which shaped her ideas about gender roles and relations she uses as a template in her relationship with her husband.

Actually, you are right! It makes sense. I also know lesbian couples, and it's very uncommon for a lesbian couple to have two extremely feminine girls going out. Usually, you see sort of butch women who basically have a lot of masculine behaviour and then usually their partners are quite feminine. So, maybe that's how I normalise relationships. As I said, I've grown up in such social structures that I think somewhere, somehow, I even see my relationships as that of what my and my husband's role should be. (Anika)

In this elongated narrative, Anika constantly drew from diverse discourses on gender from her home, host and other global cultures and maintained that she would accept gender transgression up to a certain extent, as long as it does not invade her familial space. This showcases her oscillation between traditional patriarchal and transgressive gender ideologies. Analogously, Mehzabin also indicated that she is tolerant towards men doing makeup but would not accept such a man in her life. Although she did highlight that she would not prefer to choose a man with high masculine features, indicating her affinity towards more gender-transgressive values. She, nevertheless, demonstrated an oscillation by drawing from these two gender discourses.

M: I think it's totally fine if men want to do makeup. It shouldn't have to be only for girls. I won't choose to have a man in my life who would like to have makeup. But that doesn't matter, that's my life and I would choose the way I want to and that's their life they can choose the world where they want to, and I don't have any problem sharing my public space with any of them.

I: Why do you think you would not want such a man in your life?

M: Because I don't like or do makeup that much, it's like my thing, and then I would maybe choose a man like that. Not a manly guy, because I don't like them, I like men who don't like to show themselves as men, but you have to be a nice person. I would prefer maybe some specific characteristics for myself. That's my personal choice. (Mehzabin)

Mehzabin also mentioned that her views and thoughts about gender have changed recently as she came across a book about gender. The author's views—about how gender is binary, but on a continuum—resonated with her, indicating her mutability and acceptance of gender-egalitarian ideology. However, she also maintained that gender is 'binary' and all others just fall within it, signposting a distancing from gender transgression and going more along the lines of a patriarchal viewpoint. Nevertheless, she also advocated inclusivity, arguing that individuals should have the freedom to choose their gender. She demonstrated vacillation within transgressive gender ideology and also between transgressive and patriarchal gender ideologies.

I have been reading a book and got a new perspective on gender. I think it's not bad when someone acts like a girl. The writer who wrote the book said that gender is binary, it's either male or female, but no one is 100% male and no one is 100% female so it can be in between but it's binary anyway. So, a person who is more female, can have some characteristics like a certain gender, like more feminist, and that's not bad in a way we don't have to change. If someone wants to behave like a girl, wants to wear girly things, that should be okay. You don't have to put pressure on someone to be gender neutral. That's the thing. And that's good. And if someone wants to be gender-neutral, then they can be whomever they want to be. (Mehzabin)

Both these respondents have demonstrated that their gendered views and beliefs are malleable, but only to a certain extent. Looking at certain marketplace representations, Anika and Mehzabin have indicated their openness towards gender-transgressive norms and ideals in general, but when it is 'close to their heart', they seemed less accepting and referred back to their primary gender socialisation. Therefore, eventually, they distance their 'self' from ideological debates in their ideological oscillation between these two gender discourses.

## **Peripheral Inclusion**

Mehzabin argued about the importance of inclusion over any particular gender discourse. She maintained that in our haste to pervade gender-transgressive ideology, society should also consider that there is nothing wrong with being cis men and cis women. She also implied her strong belief in binary gendering, and thus her drawing from a patriarchal discourse. According to her, it is more important to be inclusive of everyone and respect all genders, denoting receptivity towards gender transgression, and thus, demonstrating her ideological oscillation. Although one can argue that without acceptance of alternative gender identities, it is difficult for them to gain that respect and inclusion.

Why is it a bad thing to be a female or male? Why is it so necessary to be gender neutral? Almost everything in the world has different types and as humans we have different types. And there are some things in between as well, but we have to be



inclusive. We have to be respectful. Why can't we accept everyone the way they are? It's not bad to be or dress like a female or a male. It's bad to not accept the way they are and not respect others. (Mehzabin)

Mahfuz highlighted the importance of inclusivity of the more orthodox gendered subjectivities. He advocated for inclusivity to also comprise the conventional extremes based on established stereotypes because there is no spectrum without the conventional male-female bounding the continuum. According to him, inclusivity without including the stereotypical extremes is flawed, as the men and women who want to perform their traditional gender roles also have the right to be represented and included in marketplace manifestations. He demonstrated his ideological oscillation between patriarchal and transgressive gender discourses by magnifying the significance of gender binarism, but simultaneously, demonstrating values of inclusion.

I think gender stereotyping depends on the target audience. For formal clothing, if they are showing tall men in suits, with let's say broad shoulders and beards, in their mid-40s, going to the office, that's very fitting to the gender stereotypes we know. And I think it's fine because the problem with stereotypes is that people need to fall into them. If a male is very much conventionally masculine, there's nothing wrong with it, because we cannot consider the whole spectrum if we don't include the extremes of it as well. So, if advertisements show a very conventional woman, a stay-at-home mom, taking care of kids, not working full-time, or a man who is always hustling and grinding, very corporate, is there anything wrong with it? Those people exist as well, and that's their choice if somebody wants to be stereotypical, it's fine. (Mahfuz)

Faria also discussed that brands talk a lot about being inclusive, but in reality, they are really not all-inclusive but rather portray inclusivity on their own grounds, not including everyone else. She exemplified that despite a large proportion of migrants in Stockholm being Muslims, she rarely found any stores in areas that are not inhabited by refugees that sell headscarves for Muslim women. She interpreted this as a sign that brands are not looking to truly challenge the hegemonic system. She argued that only a shock such as COVID-19—which, according to her, has largely altered the marketplace in many ways—can change these deeply entrenched systems of, what she sees as, gender imbalances. Thus, to her, inclusivity is fallible and not real embracing of diversity as advertised, and the marketplace only reproduces existing norms, rather than breaking boundaries. She, hence, oscillates between patriarchal and transgressive gender ideologies. It can also be interpreted that market commodification of migrant subjectivities is still limited, compared to that highlighted by Veresiu and Giesler (2018) in their study of the Canadian multicultural marketplace.

There are so many Muslim immigrants here now. But I haven't seen any veils anywhere, other than the shady areas in Stockholm Rinkeby. They are not looking

for a revolution, just going with the status quo. Now, when you go to Gamla Stan, they are selling *masker* [masks], *handskar* [hand-gloves] and mufflers. That's the kind of a shock they would need to bring changes when it comes to gender. Just bringing one African model in a H&M ad in addition to two white ones, it's not really inclusivity as you would want it to be. (Faria)

To these participants, the inclusivity commodified by the marketplace is perceived as simulated and only peripheral inclusion (Rennstam & Sullivan, 2016; 2018) because they exclude the traditional conservative and dominant patriarchal ideology. In a similar vein, Regany and Emontspool (2015, p. 305) discussed “that given certain larger societal conflicts, spectacles initially deemed to provide positive experiences and entertainment can invite broader political and religious problematics of inclusion and exclusion” in the marketplace, which is relevant for these participants as they navigate conflicts.

Participants have demonstrated their ideological oscillation through their narratives about consumption and marketplace communication in this section. Similar to the discussion above pertaining to a disconnection between gender beliefs and ideals with the adoption of gender norms and practices, informants have illustrated that, in terms of marketplace communication and consumption, they distance themselves from discursive debates. They have also demonstrated vacillation between gender discourses. The later part of this section highlighted how some respondents found inclusion enforced and representative of only the liberals, silencing conservative voices.

## Retaining Islamic & Reworking Transgressive Gender Ideologies

Some respondents illustrated ideological oscillation by demonstrating retention of Islamic and reworking of transgressive gender discourses by striking a balanced gender outlook, reworking their gender outlook through personal interactions, and blending Islamic and transgressive gender discourses remaking their views and beliefs.

### Striking a Balanced Gender Outlook

Faria painted an imaginary future scenario, speculating about what if one of her kids, after becoming an adult, wanted to cohabitate with someone as a *sambo*—meaning ‘partner’ in a couple’s live-in relationship, recognised legally as equivalent to marriage, without actually getting married—which is a legitimised and normative practice in Sweden. She identified that such a living arrangement would be against

the norms and values of Bangladeshi culture, particularly because it is not permitted in her home culture and it is prohibited in her religion. Moreover, she highlighted another perception that Bangladeshis have about cohabitation; more precisely, that it is not a very serious relationship because they are not getting married. *Sambo*, she argued, constitutes a very serious relationship in Sweden, exemplified by her Swedish friends living with a *sambo*, who have a lot of kids, but are not getting married merely because of inconvenience rather than their lack of commitment. To Faria, a couple in *sambo* has the same amount of respect for their partner that a husband and wife have for each other, signifying its importance for the Swedish culture.

If we continue living in Sweden, in future, if our kid, after turning 18, wants to live with a *sambo*, that's not really something that's really acceptable in our religion and our typical Bangladeshi society. In Dhaka, they think about living together as a fling. But then again that's very natural here. I have friends who have been living with their partner for several years, have so many kids, they are not getting married because it's just inconvenient and they don't have time. So, I think that's what would be more important to teach my kids, that if you want to live with them, then it's fine, but it can't be for the sake of it, you have to be very sure about it, and you have to be very sure that you are ready for this kind of a serious relationship. (Faria)

Faria, in this instance, demonstrated how she adopted Swedish cultural norms and values, which are transgressive but concurrently acknowledged gendered practices based on her religion. She stated that the right approach would be to educate themselves more about these norms and values, teach their children about Swedish and Bangladeshi cultures and look forward to mediating such tensions in the future. She expressed a concrete decision by stating that it is important to impart the value of such a relationship to her children, and if they were okay with that, she would be willing to let go her home culture's Islamic gender ideology and acclimatise more with the host cultural gender-transgressive ideology. Thus, she acknowledged that she had not been able to fully adapt to her new host culture but argued that her beliefs and practices are evolving and is open towards acceptance in the future. Her ideological oscillation is palpable in her words with a balanced outlook on gender ideologies between Sweden and Bangladesh.

Nabil highlighted how religious values inform Bangladeshis' perceptions of gender against the backdrop of Western influences, but simultaneously, he demonstrated how individuals only cherry-pick certain contexts to apply their religious ideologies. Talking about the hypocrisy of *hijabs* or veils used by women, he indicated how they were mere fashion statements, implying acceptance of gender transgression. Concurrently, by separating himself from all those Bangladeshis advocating for a more Islamist moral policing of women's clothing choices, he distanced himself from Islamic gender ideology. Nabil's narrative reflects his dissent towards this disrespect for religion—by the marketplace and consumers of hijabs—through co-

optation and commodification of religious objects into instruments of fashion and hints towards the retention of Islamic gender ideology, and hence, an oscillation.

I think this sort of progressiveness is not well accepted in our society. People use their religious beliefs as per their convenience, if it is about their wife, children, or parents, they will say one thing, and if it's in general, they will act differently. The same person who is wondering why Shakib's [Bangladesh's most popular athlete] wife does not have a hijab, in 80% of the cases you will see that their wife doesn't do a hijab. And currently for Bangladeshi girls, hijab is another form of portraying them as unique, because there are new hijabs available in the markets, like fashion hijabs, sexy hijabs, see-through hijabs, I don't know what the fuck are they, but people use it just to differentiate them, this has nothing to do with religion. Those who actually sport hijab, you won't see their faces, or even their fingernails. So, that group is very limited. But apart from that, this has become a space for fashion. (Nabil)

By studying the fashion consumption practices of veiling among urban Turkish women, Sandıkcı and Ger (2010) explored how the practice of veiling, particularly perceived as stigmatising and aberrant among the secular and urban population, has become a fashionable clothing practice. In their previous work, Sandıkcı and Ger (2007) argued how 'the *tesettürlü* women'—women sporting Islamic veils—represent ideological conflicts between the secular ideology of the Republic and Islamism, indicating an ideological oscillation. Nabil's description coincides with the account of these Turkish women by Sandıkcı and Ger (2007; 2010), who sported Islamic veils by shifting a stigmatised practice into a fashionable one, amidst the growing ideologies of Islamism and neo-liberalism. Thus, according to Nabil, there is a chasm between Islamic gender ideology and practices of these women.

Mahfuz demonstrated that seemingly his own values—informed by Islamic gender ideology—are inconsistent with ideals of gender transgression. However, he counteracted by stating that his own religious teachings provided him with the understanding not to enforce his values on others who have diverging views. He also espoused gender transgression by advocating for individuals to be able to make their own choices pertaining to gender. It can be interpreted that Mahfuz demonstrated an oscillation between Islamic and transgressive gender ideologies.

I don't think they are in strong contrast with my own values. Let's say I have religious values and social values, but then I also know that the values that I hold belong to a system. For example, if I think I'm a guy who in his early 30s who came from Bangladesh, has a Muslim upbringing, how would I feel about this? But I know that a lot of things that I believe in belong to a system, which is something that I cannot and should not, even according to my own religion or learnings, superimpose on someone. Because even religion has to be a matter of free will that you have to think about it and then you accept it as you understand it and there's nothing that should be forced upon you. I would rather go for freedom of choice where people have many different options to pick from and they're confused than in a system where something is just imposed on you. (Mahfuz)

Shakib articulated how he perceived gender transgression as three distinct issues. First, gender equality was, to some extent, normalised to him, as he drew from the discursive resources of gender equality and transgression in the Swedish culture. He recognised that feminist movements have been around for years and are necessary for certain social changes. However, he posited that it was the capitalist market system of the dominant host culture that dupes consumers by making profits from these issues. His arguments against LGBTQ+ individuals could be framed as a retention of his Islamic gender ideology.

Discrimination against females and changing your sex are two different things. Gender equality was this kind of a movement, it's nothing new, it's hundreds of years old, and of course needed in modern society. I think that these companies here are behind this, taking advantage of consumers, making huge money out of this gender equality stuff by telling people that they can change their gender, that you can feel like a female. The idea of changing sex is a completely negative thing that would just destroy and create problems, for human civilisation in the future. It was not even possible to imagine that thirty years ago. I see LGBT as natural, you cannot change that or do anything about it, because their feelings work that way, it's a very minor percentage and didn't complicate gender reproduction. Societies and countries should accept it, make it legal. I have no problem with that. I see these three are all different and should not be mixed up. (Shakib)

Conversely, he had problems wrapping his head around gender non-binary and transgender issues, which he paralleled with sex change some transgenders go through. However, it should be noted that individuals can still identify as gender non-binary or as a gender not assigned at their birth, even without undergoing surgeries. Nevertheless, he reaffirmed his previous position that such issues are new and were inconceivable even a few decades back. For him, they are created by brands in the marketplace of the dominant host culture and are problematic in terms of human reproduction (as evident from his excerpt in the previous chapter). However, he found LGBTQ+ issues natural, as, to him, these individuals are born that way and it cannot be changed, which engenders no issues with human reproduction. He even went on to argue about making LGBTQ+ legal, which is incongruous with his religious viewpoint, but demonstrated an acknowledgement of gender-transgressive ideology. Therefore, Shakib assumes a blending by accepting gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies—through his acceptance of gender equality and gay people—but conversely, retaining patriarchal and rejecting gender-transgressive ideologies, mainly due to his beliefs pertaining to trans people changing their gender assigned at birth. Therefore, his oscillation showcases a reworking of gender transgressive discourse.

## Reworking Gender Outlook Through Interactions

Ideological oscillation involves respondents reworking their views and beliefs on gender relations by internalising certain ideals from the host culture. In this section, I use excerpts from various interviews about *hijras*—the transgender and gender non-binary group in Bangladesh (Shahriar, 2020)—that came up from conversations about commodification of gender non-binarism and transgenderism in the marketplace, and demonstrate how internalising gender-transgressive ideology after acculturation has led some informants to rework their views and beliefs in relation to the gender discourses they drew from. Molander (2021) argued that while traditional gender ideologies are deeply rooted, they can be reworked with influences from the Swedish gender-egalitarian ideology. Thus, gender ideologies could be construed as somewhat malleable.

Most respondents have demonstrated that they reworked their views and beliefs about gender after their border crossing. Anika's response is shown in the excerpt below, when prompted with an advertisement by Thinx, featuring a transman wearing period-proof underwear. While Anika's preconceived notion about transgender people from Bangladesh, similar to Asif in the previous chapter, she considered them dangerous because she did not feel safe around them and hence appeared a bit more on guard when exposed to transgender individuals. However, working with a transgender person in her workplace in Sweden made a difference by not only creating acceptance, but also a sense of potential feeling of safety as she highlighted how transgender individuals are not so different from us. This personal interaction with a transgender individual intimately helped her normalise the acceptance of gender transgression. She oscillates between her incumbent Islamic gender ideology and acceptance of a transgressive one.

I know that trans men have periods. It's good to see that actually there are products [on retail shelves] that are not hidden beside diapers. Sweden is the first place where I've seen sanitary pads for trans-men, transsexuals, or transgenders. In my workplace, I work with transgender people as well, and this would never happen in Bangladesh. Working with them, I never felt that they are a different gender. When you stay in a society where this is normalised, you basically first look at them as humans, then you consider the gender. In Bangladesh, there are two forms of reactions. First, *hijras* are ostracised. I mean, I've grown up knowing that apparently in my religion, *hijras* are basically cursed in nature. So, if God is very pissed off at you then you basically give birth to transgenders. Second, there is no acceptance if you are different than male or female. They were basically left out on the streets by their own families who could not deal with the humiliation of having a transgender born. So, my interaction with these people was never normal, they were either beggars, thieves, or goons. They are used to threatening people and are treated badly. So, transgenders for me were associated with danger, [because] of how they behaved. When I came here, at first, I never realised that I was working with a transgender person, but then when I got to know them, for me it never felt any different. Eventually that gave me the realisation that if you treat people right, if they're given equal opportunities regardless of gender,

they grow up to be humans with values and ideals that, necessarily does not contradict with yours. Your environment has a big influence on how you feel or how you treat others. So now, I think, when I even go back home, I'm more open and accepting towards them. (Anika)

Similar to Anika—and many other respondents whose quotes have not included due to space constraints—Fahim also indicated that hijras in Bangladesh are social pariahs and encounter many problems including possibilities to work, highlighting the social discrimination against them (Chaney, Sabur & Sahoo, 2020; Shahriar, 2020). He posited that things are looking up with certain politico-legal changes attempting to challenge the social stigma and oppression; however, this is in conflict with religious ideologies (Shahriar, 2020). Fahim recalled an incident when a transgender representation in media prompted him to think more about transgender people. Analogous to Anika, he also talked about forging a personal connection with a transgender individual, by working together and realising that much of the social stigma was just that – stigma, concluding that they are normal human beings. This indicates the reworking of Fahim's gender outlook during his time in Sweden with ideological oscillation between Islamic and transgressive gender ideologies.

Back when I lived in Bangladesh, hijras were always considered outcast in society and not allowed to find any employment. But things have improved in recent years. I came to know that the government has passed legislation allowing them to work in some governmental institutions, like traffic police or in city-corporation. However, still the majority lacks fundamental rights.... Back in 2013-14, I saw a newspaper cover with a picture of a transgender guy. It made me think that if this guy can host one of the most popular TV shows, then society is quite open and gender neutrality is pretty normal here. This widened my notion and helped me to adopt the idea of being okay with gender neutrality.... I personally had an experience of working with a transgender. He was very good with me. Everybody knew from the beginning that he is transgender, and it didn't bother anyone since it's pretty normal here in Sweden. He was very competent and good in nature. I spent over a year with him and we really had a good personal relationship. We did our work, ate our lunch, went out together, helped each other. (Fahim)

Mehzabin, however, indicated that because of her lack of connection to transgender individuals, she did not presume to understand what they go through. However, she also showcased a similar reworking and change in her views on gender, when she was acquainted with a gay individual personally. It made her understand the struggles they go through. Gay people are oppressed, socially stigmatised and religiously not accepted in Bangladesh (Hossain, 2017). In a similar vein, she expressed interest to understand transgender people. Thus, Mehzabin, similarly to Fahim and Anika, demonstrated that forging personal connections can help one achieve oscillation in their gender outlook and be more accepting towards gender transgression, despite their religious background.

I don't have any kind of prejudice about trans people, it's just I don't have that much knowledge either. I haven't met anyone who's transgender, so I don't have the knowledge to understand them. I know that there are a lot of challenges from societies. A lot of people treat them differently. I would definitely like to understand. I couldn't understand homosexuality before I met someone who was gay. After I moved from Bangladesh, when I came from a society like this and then I met someone and got to understand the struggle, the way they live and the reality. It's important to be acceptable towards different people and we have to be inclusive. (Mehzabin)

Samir narrated two accounts involving transgender individuals, highlighting the potential of change in his ideological status pertaining to gender transgression, that can mobilise social change. First, he talked about how he and his wife regularly discuss with their friends and family how these marginalised individuals are being mistreated in Bangladeshi society. He speculated that, given similar access to opportunities and resources, one can assuage their maltreatment. He highlighted the mindset that he thinks the Bangladeshi mass has about these disenfranchised transgender individuals, preventing their citizenship. It can be interpreted that this also reflects his old thoughts about this issue, indicating his oscillation between his home cultural Islamic and transgressive gender ideologies. He exemplified this with an example of meeting a transgender individual on a Scandinavian Airlines flight from Dhaka to Stockholm. Looking at such normalising representations triggered his thoughts about the missing case of opportunities and rights of the transgender community in Bangladesh. One could argue that he would not have these realisations if he never lived in Sweden.

I sometimes have this discussion with my wife or friends that why are we doing this to a certain community that has a lot of potentials. They are also people, so if you let them get proper education and values, they can be useful for the whole country, earning like you and me and nothing is stopping them except how society thinks about them and how we treat them. Many in our country think that they should live in a different world, without benefits we get as citizens. I remember when I was in my second flight to Sweden, I saw several cabin crews in the airline SAS and they were transgender, serving me food, and I was wondering how a Bangladeshi transgender person would never reach this height. (Samir)

I would end this sub-section with another narrative from Samir, where he talked about a story he read about a woman, who is in, to a certain extent, a powerful position in society. When she gave birth to a transgender child, while she was unconscious, her husband and his family decided to give the child up for adoption to the transgender community. However, when she realised that her child was not born dead, she consciously attempted to mobilise change by opening up schools to teach transgender children and in the hopes of finding her child one day. Samir illustrated that this narrative incited a stimulating reaction to his thoughts and reworked his ideological position to a more transgressive one, but only because of his experiences with transgender people in Sweden. However, he also illustrated



traces of Islamic gender ideology, as he critiqued the transgender communities having their own political agenda, indicating an oscillation.

I read a story about a woman from Bangladesh, who wrote about her own story about giving birth to a transgender child. She was a wife of an army person. She remembers that she saw or she heard her child crying, but she was senseless and after a while when she was back in her senses, she heard that the child was delivered dead, and she couldn't just believe it. So, she had a lot of confusion, she kept looking for answers, and finally she got to know from a nurse that her child was actually given to the [transgender] community, because her husband and in-laws did not really agree to raise a transgender kid in the family. And that was really life-changing for her. She started a school for the transgender community and you know going to transgender people and helping them because it's very hard, if they get a child, they will not return it to you. They have their own interests. After five years, she knew that one of these kids is her kid. That was really sad but also thought-provoking. (Samir)

### **Remaking Outlook by Blending of Gender Discourses**

Mizan recalled how he imagined the gender role of his future wife—when she was his girlfriend—based on his beliefs and values from Islamic gender ideology while studying at university before migrating to Sweden. However, he admitted that his thoughts and values have changed, as he thought that women should also work, indicating his willingness to distance himself from some of his home cultural ideals. He directly attributed his change in beliefs and values to his acculturation into the Swedish culture and his experience of such transgression practices, as opposed to what was normative in his home culture. Mizan then went on to bring Islamic narratives to rationalise his newfound beliefs. He went on to highlight how women are placed highly in Islam and women's right have been promoted long before the calls for feminism or gender transgression from a Western perspective. Here, Mizan demonstrated an espousing of Islamic gender ideologies, and hence an oscillation between gender ideologies.

When I was a student in Dhaka, I used to think that my future wife will be a housewife. Nowadays I don't think like that. I had a relationship with my wife. I was her teacher and she is the daughter of my aunt. I knew that she was a brilliant girl but still I thought that she doesn't have to work. Now I think if my partner becomes something great that will inspire me. After coming to this country my perception has changed drastically, there is no discrimination on the basis of gender in Sweden. If I tell you from a religious perspective God prioritised girls the most and the prophet had daughters only. His all four children were girls. He loved his daughters. He used to share problems and issues with Aisha (RA) and took her opinion. People says that Islam doesn't respect women, that's totally wrong. It is Islam that gave women rights on their parental property. No other religion gave this before Islam. Islam provided rights to property and rights to knowledge. From the so-called Western perspective

or from the Islamic perspective I can say that we shouldn't discriminate girls. I think women have rights of studying, running a business, or doing a job.

He continued that his religious values indicated that women should be allowed to work, and concurrently, by working, these women—such as his wife—can maintain and enrich religious values, indicating his retention of Islamic gender ideology as well as being receptive towards gender equality and transgression. In his ideological oscillation, he also indicated that his acculturation into Sweden had led to changes in his views and beliefs about gender.

Women can work by abiding by all the rules of Islam. Then I thought I can encourage her to become an officer. For the development of Islam, we need to bring women into our system. If a woman becomes a magistrate, wears a hijab and does her job, that's great for society. It will motivate people to educate their daughters and that's not contradictory to Islam. Rather it increases the beauty of Islam. We need to preach through our work. These things encouraged me to change my perspective; one: it will bring economic stability to our home; two: it will increase our social status; three: she can give a message to society through her work. (Mizan)

Fahim posited that one needs to demonstrate normative conformity and political correctness to blend into a culture. He indicated that in Sweden, gender equality and transgression are well accepted and considered normalised due to the proliferation of these ideologies through neo-liberalism. Hence, individuals with antagonistic views would be condemned and shunned. This is because Bangladesh is dominated by Islamic gender discourse, whereas in Sweden neo-liberal proliferation of gender-transgressive ideology necessitates normative conformity.

It is very common in every society to go with the flow. For example, if I follow Shariah [Islamic] Law instead of gender neutrality in Sweden, I will definitely be excluded from society. But if I were in Bangladesh, I might advocate Shariah Law instead of gender neutrality. (Fahim)

Fahim explicated that he enjoyed more freedom in Sweden as a man. He indicated that the traditional society of Bangladesh, propelled by Islamic ideologies, makes it taboo for a man to be so openly conversational and physical with a woman. He talked about how it is easier for a man in Sweden to approach an unknown woman and strike a conversation and ask for directions, tips, or suggestions. In Bangladesh, this would be frowned upon. Moreover, from a security perspective, women would not take kindly being approached by an unknown man, being suspicious of their motives. However, in Sweden, men and women freely interact with bodily gestures such as handshakes or hugs. In Bangladesh, one does not often hug a colleague of the opposite gender; it could be frowned upon. Hence, Fahim romanticised the Swedish gender-transgressive ethos, repudiating gendered ideals promoted by Islamic ideologies and showcasing his oscillation.

In Sweden, it's quite easy to talk to or ask for help from the opposite gender, compared to Bangladesh, which has a very restrictive Islamic society, it is a conservative Muslim country. So, in that case, if you are not a family member you are not supposed to talk to the opposite sex. It's quite hard and more of a taboo. But in Sweden, it doesn't matter whether you are a man or a woman, it's okay to handshake or hug. Even on the street, it's quite normal for a man to ask a woman for directions or tips, to start a conversation. (Fahim)

Furthermore, Mehzabin talked about how her parents reacted when they found out she was marrying someone from a vastly different cultural background. Her narrative highlights how ideological tensions manifested in her life when she wanted to get married to a Swede. While his different cultural background raised questions, it was his different religion that caused trouble with her parents. According to their religious values, one cannot get married to a disbeliever or infidel (Izberk-Bilgin, 2012), who subscribes to another religious value system. She also hid the fact that she was a *sambo*, cohabitating with her boyfriend, a very Western and Swedish cultural practice. In Bangladesh, Islamic doctrines sanction unmarried couples living together—particularly those in the middle class, and often results in their stigmatisation by society (D'souza, 2021)—and thus, she informed her parents that she was staying with a girl. She described how desperately her parents wanted to change her mind about marrying a Christian and a foreigner due to their religious ethos and societal pressures, hoping to get her married to a Bangladeshi Muslim groom. Incompatible religion was the biggest hurdle in this cultural conflict, which many Bangladeshi immigrants often experience. However, she showcased a different mindset of 'independence' and agency, which women in Bangladesh are seldom granted. She also narrated how her parents eventually accepted her husband, when they 'got to know him'. Nevertheless, she still had to get married to him before asking her parents for acceptance. In this excerpt, Mehzabin demonstrated how she navigated various ideological tensions and not only she adapted Swedish cultural practices, but she was also able to convince her parents, living in Bangladesh, to become normalised towards it. Her 'transgressive' practices were at odds with the cultural system in Bangladesh informed by Islamic values and ideals.

My mom is very supportive of everything I do. So, when I met him, I told my parents after two months, because I felt confident about him, about us. And then they were pushing me to get married to another guy. So, I told them, and my mom was very sad. She was screaming at me how could you do this and that was like a big shock for me, because her opinion meant a lot to me. At that time, we were living together but that I couldn't tell my parents, because it's not okay. I told them that I was staying with a friend. It was difficult, they tried to convince me for such a long time. We got married two years after we met. And then there was this biggest question about religion as well, how do we adjust the cultural differences to cope with everything. But I live my life my own way, it doesn't matter what they think, and they knew it. It's nice that they came around in the end. When I was in Bangladesh a couple of

years back, they got that they couldn't change my mind, so they just accepted it. And after they met him, they really liked him, so now it's different. (Mehzabin)

By studying wedding rituals among diasporic Hindu families in New Zealand, Fernandez, Veer and Lastovicka (2011) highlighted how diasporic consumers not only cross borders between their home and host cultures, but also within their original culture. Using Hindu meanings of sacredness, purity and auspiciousness, they demonstrated the transference of a foreign bride into an Indian daughter and how gold is used as artefacts for collective identity constructions. In a similar vein, Mehzabin's attempt to transform her husband into a 'good Bangladeshi groom' was observed throughout her narratives during the interview.

Respondents discussed the various influences of Islamic ideology and how it can facilitate or obstruct their acculturation into their host culture. Shakib here asserted that women in Sweden can wear more revealing clothes, and this has been normalised in his host culture. He posited that cultural values and norms of Swedes do not stem from their religious ethos. On the contrary, in Bangladesh, Islamic ideology 'dictates' all acts and practices, which includes prescribing how women should cover their bodies and not wear 'short dresses' that expose parts of their bodies. In essence, Shakib equated Sweden with 'Western' cultures by referring to his host culture as emanating from Western values where women are allowed to show off their skin. Although Shakib did not express his own views here, this demonstrated how religious doctrines and morals might seem to incarcerate for those acculturating into the Swedish culture.

Here wearing short dresses, people don't see it differently, it's very normal, they don't mix religion with appearance. But in Bangladesh, it's considered a very bad thing, society doesn't accept that, and the impact of religion is much more distinct and vivid, it dictates how you dress and behave. (Shakib)

Overall, in this chapter on ideological oscillation, respondents demonstrated that they retained traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies and reworked their views and beliefs on egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Thus, while their beliefs about gender developed in Bangladesh highly influences their views on gender relations in the marketplace—as interpreted from their interview stories—they also continuously change as they acculturate in their new host culture. As discussed earlier, gendered beliefs and views constantly evolve as gender socialisation continuously alters our gender ideals (Thompson & Üstüner, 2015). Thus, participants demonstrated an oscillation of their gendered norms and views, although in certain cases some just distanced themselves from any ideological debates about gender. Now, moving on from views about the marketplace and consumption, I will discuss a specific form of consumption practice that participants in this mode engaged in.

## Communal Consumption Practices

Based on their narratives, participants engaging in ideological oscillation in their navigation of contesting gender ideologies are more likely to employ communal consumption practices. As respondents balance and change their views, norms and practices navigating through ideological oscillation, they often ended up adopting certain host cultural practices—often out of necessity and convenience, thus normative conformity—but also resisting certain dominant host cultural practices and consuming in their own ethnic groups. They engaged in collective resistance by deploying communal consumption in diasporic spaces. Respondents mostly gathered in several communal spaces together with other Bangladeshis in their city. They often employed ritualised consumption and decommodification practices (Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry Jr., 1989; Cronin, McCarthy & Collins, 2014; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). Cronin, McCarthy and Collins (2014, p. 15) demonstrated how consumers use decommodification, as a micro-social ritualistic act and a mode of everyday resistance, in a communal setting through appropriation—that includes removing labels or packaging, “cooking or baking of foods”, or any other personalisation or presentation methods—to differentiate and separate them from “mass-produced, commercially processed and packaged food products”. Informants using this consumption practice actively avoided brands that they felt had no place in their diasporic community.

Respondents co-opted various ritualised consumption from their home country in their consumption practices in Sweden. They used celebrations of Islamic festivals—such as Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Shab-e-Barat—as well as Bangladeshi festivals—such as Bengali New Year, International Mother Language Day, Independence Day and Victory Day. Hasan articulated how the Bangladeshi diaspora in Malmö often meets together. He described various events and festivals from his home culture. Hasan narrated that he meets other Bangladeshis in the city during prayers of Eid al-Fitr or Eid al-Adha as they stay after the prayers to catch up. They have various celebrations, such as potlucks in a diasporic space or barbecues in parks during the summer, where they usually bring food from each family and have a group fest. Gender structures from their home culture are accordingly reproduced, as Hasan noted that it is mostly the wives being engaged in cooking for these fests, while the men are only involved in barbecuing, a cooking activity typically associated with men in Bangladesh. Similarly, Klasson and Ulver (2015) discussed how to masculinise domesticity, as middle-class men in Sweden engage in social cooking practices to enact their masculine identity, which used to be a stigmatised rendition of feminised masculinity.

Well, I usually meet other Bangladeshis here during various festivals. When I attend the prayers on Eid day, we usually hang out for some time afterwards, have a smoke. Sometimes we have bean fests, where each of us, well mostly our wives, cooks something and have a potluck. I remember inviting several of our Bangladeshi friends

here at our place on *Pahela Boishakh*. My wife worked really hard to arrange a really huge platter of *bhorta* and *hilsha* fish, she's an amazing cook. We are also invited to some of our friends' houses for iftar during Ramadan. During the summer, we congregate in groups in a park to barbecue. My wife generally marinates the meat and I get to grill it. Before COVID-19, we organised a huge gathering of more than a hundred people from our community. There was dancing, singing, a full-fledged cultural show. It was a good place for kids to get in touch with our cultural roots and values. (Hasan)

These individuals also resisted their dominant host cultures by meeting in groups in these diasporic spaces. Hasan continued that during the celebration of the Bengali New Year, his wife toiled hard to arrange a lot of traditional *Boishakh*<sup>27</sup> food, *hilsha*<sup>28</sup> and *bhorta*<sup>29</sup>, denoting retention of traditional patriarchal ideology. Hasan also reminisced about celebrating a congregation of Bangladeshis in Malmö in a cultural programme. He underscored its significance in helping maintain the influence of their home cultural norms and values, particularly among the younger generation. Through the consumption of food in these festivals, they also decommodified Swedish practices by giving separate meanings to their activities.

Scholars in CCT have demonstrated how consumers can engage in everyday resistance through food (Cronin, McCarthy & Collins, 2014; Moisio, Arnould & Price, 2004; Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard & Kristensen, 2011). Moisio, Arnould and Price (2004) interrogated the role of healthy and nutritious homemade food in the negotiation of family identity with contesting food offerings in the marketplace. Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard and Kristensen (2011) studied consumer resistance in the marketplace by moralising food choices and illustrated how consumers distinguish between good and bad choices to protect themselves from the antagonistic capitalist marketplace. These consumers often purchase products with very insignificant traces of branding and use them to prepare and craft their food consumption. Cronin, McCarthy and Collins (2014) explored how the hipster community uses food to engage in everyday consumer resistance against the distasteful commercial food marketplace and perform their hipster identity through vegetarian choices, brand avoidances and decommodification practices. It can be argued that these communal consumption practices in diasporic spaces are a form of everyday consumer resistance.

Hirschman, Ruvio and Touzani (2011) discussed how diasporic celebrations diverge from majority celebrations in a country. Studying minority religion communities

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<sup>27</sup> *Boishakh* is the first month in the Bengali calendar and *Pahela Boishakh* is the first day of that month, and thus a celebration of the Bengali New Year.

<sup>28</sup> The national fish of Bangladesh, traditionally eaten with watered rice on Bengali New Year.

<sup>29</sup> Mashed food—which can be made of individual items such as vegetables like potato, eggplant, papaya or lentils, eggs, or even fish—mixed with onions, chilli and oil.

inside a country where the dominant religion is different from that of those communities, they showcased two different ways in which the diasporic Christian community celebrated Christmas in Tunisia. First, in public spaces, European Tunisian Christians joined other Christians in religious services, transgressed national, linguistic and racial borders and united based on their religious ideologies. Second, in private spaces, at their homes, these Christians consciously prevented inviting their friends from other religions. They expressed how such interventions, when uninvited Muslim acquaintances show up, extinguish the sanctity of their celebrations. Similarly, Hirschman, Ruvio and Touzani (2011) also demonstrated how Muslims in a minority diasporic setting, in the United States, also only invite family and friends during Ramadan to break their fast collectively, signposting communal space for acculturation, consumption and resistance. These devoted Muslims also decommmodified the profane marketplace (Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry Jr., 1989; Cronin, McCarthy & Collins, 2014; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991) through collective practices into a hallowed one. Respondents in this study also demonstrated a similar penchant for such diasporic engagements.

Studying the annual phenomenon of *Boishakhi Mela*<sup>30</sup> in East London, Alexander (2019, p. 230) interrogated the tensions and ambiguities of the Bangladeshi diaspora's cultural practices in the U.K.:

...the Mela functions as a performance of Bengali identity, an evocation of the ties to the homeland and to other Bengali communities in diaspora and a claiming of space in the place of arrival: ...the 'rituals of diaspora'... The Boishakhi Mela is, then, examined as a performance of diasporic cultural identity, which is taken up in a context of British multiculturalism both as a way of contesting hegemonic representations of Bengali/Muslim marginalisation and as a key site for the commodification and commercialisation of ethnicity and 'culture'... At the same time, the Mela provides an illuminating lens through which to view the shifting contours of Bengali identity, notably the struggle over religious, gendered and generational identities.

Some respondents have demonstrated resistance towards certain Swedish celebrations, while embracing others, showing that they are knowledgeable about these due to influences from the global consumer culture. Anika highlighted that:

Easter and Valborg, these are not in my frame of reference. While during Christmas, I am in a celebratory mood, those festivals I know I follow, but others I don't know. I go out and eat Christmas special food, watch Christmas holiday movies, roam around in Christmas markets, engage in shopping retail therapy, I totally become engrossed in the holiday spirit, because I know about them from before. But for midsummer, I am not too bothered, and I'm like what the fuck is Easter? (Anika)

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<sup>30</sup> A traditional fair to commemorate the start of the Bengali New Year.

Alexander (2013) also studied the celebration of *Ekushe*<sup>31</sup> (International Mother Language Day) and demonstrated that the Bangladeshi community in London strived to maintain the connection with their homeland by establishing monuments in diasporic spaces to memorialise and reimagine their nostalgic connections. According to Peñaloza (1994), these represents sites that are segregated from the mainstream. Hirschman, Ruvio and Touzani (2011) indicated that a lack of public celebrations of Christmas in Tunisia led these Christians to celebrate Christmas at their diasporic homes, with Christmas decorations from the marketplace as well as gold, silver, red and blue Christmas tree ornaments, silver garlands for the tree, stars, candy cane, wreaths, chimney fire and Santa figurines. Simultaneously, their Christmas decorations also had traces of Tunisian fruits like figs and date, pastries and flowers like roses and jasmines as ornaments for decorations. This indicates that such migrant consumers engaged in ideological oscillation, balancing between home and host culture ideologies.

Informants such as Hasan demonstrated above that consumption of food is used to engage in everyday resistance. Khaled talked about how Bangladeshis frequently visit South Asian grocery shops in Umeå for food consumption. Khaled, like all other respondents, visits South Asian grocery stores to buy grocery items, such as cooking spices, which are unavailable in regular Swedish grocery stores like ICA or Coop, or to buy alternative products that are available in the Swedish food markets but does not serve the purposes for these informants. Khaled discussed here that he visited South Asian shops to buy meat because they sell *halal* meats, which is difficult to find outside, but only in certain Arabic butchers. Moreover, for Bangladeshi cooking, there are certain cuts required in, for instance, beef. Zaman also mentioned the need to visit these diasporic-targeted grocery stores for local Bangladeshi food ingredients. Previously in this chapter, Mahfuz also talked about this.

For the type of meat, we eat, I usually have to go to an Indian or a Pakistani grocery store, you know for *halal* and also the cut. (Khaled)

As I like to have Bengali cuisine, I need to go to some special shops for some ingredients. (Zaman)

Talking about his food consumption during lunch, Zaman mentioned that he prefers to consume Bangladeshi delicacies when eating in the office. However, he can only do this because he works with a few Bangladeshi people and so it is easier for him to consume Bangladeshi food. In contrast, Hasan indicated that it is more difficult for him to eat Bangladeshi food in his office because he mostly works with Swedes

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<sup>31</sup> *Ekushe* means 21<sup>st</sup> (of February), representing the observance of the (UN recognised) International Mother Language Day to mark the commencement of 1952 Bangladesh's language movement, when Bengalis died to resist (West) Pakistan's advances and protect their right to speak Bangla.



and he does not want to be embarrassed by the smell from his lunch overpowering his colleagues' olfactory. However, they all demonstrated communal consumption as a part of their ideological oscillation, as they learned to navigate by balancing and changing.

And for lunch, 60% of the time I bring cooked food from home and other 40% I eat outside. When I say cooked food it's mostly Bengali cuisine. When I eat outside, I mostly eat fast food and very rarely Swedish dishes. (Zaman)

I once took Bangladeshi food to my office and after heating it in the oven, the whole place smelled like curry. (Hasan)

In this chapter, I presented how migrant informants from Bangladesh engaged in ideological oscillation—which involves retaining traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender discourses and reworking gender-egalitarian and transgressive discourses—and change in their cultural practices and views, as they draw from various gender discourses. Therefore, their primary gender socialisation started to undergo changes as they navigated and balanced their life and consumption practices. In the next chapter, I will present the final mode of gender transculturation – ideological osmosis.

# Ideological Osmosis

This chapter demonstrates how migrant consumers engage in what I term ideological osmosis in their navigation of contesting gender ideologies—gender transculturation—to make sense of their acculturation experiences using resources and communication in the marketplace. In this mode of navigating ideological tensions through osmosis, respondents illustrated changes in their gendered beliefs and practices, discerned through their views about gender relations during the interviews. Oxford English Dictionary (2022) defines the word ‘osmosis’ as “the gradual and often unconscious assimilation or transfer of ideas, knowledge, influences”. ‘Osmosis’ has also been in other fields, such as organisational studies. Gibson and Papa (2000, p. 68) defined ‘organisational osmosis’ as “seemingly effortless adoption of the ideas, values, and culture of an organization on the basis of preexisting socialization experiences” and argued that “common ideological grounding and anticipatory socialization experiences...results in organizational osmosis”. The notion of ‘ideological osmosis’ has also been employed within sociology by Li (2012) who studied racial inequalities among first and second-generation Asian-American immigrants in the U.S., highlighting the complexity of immigrants’ adoption of host cultural ideologies. I employed ‘osmosis’ instead of ‘assimilation’ or ‘overassimilation’ as used within the consumer acculturation literature (Luedicke, 2011; Peñaloza, 1994; Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983) because it reflects the complexities of the adoption of norms, values, beliefs and ideals in post-assimilationist consumer acculturation, not palpable in ‘assimilation’.

Ideological osmosis, thus, involves a process of gradual or (in)voluntary adoption of cultural values and practices of the host culture. These respondents demonstrated a rejection of incumbent ideological orientations from their home culture and were open towards embracing customs, norms, values and practices of their host culture. Participants in this study have demonstrated ideological osmosis in two ways. First, some informants *rejected* and let go of their cultural practices and values from their home cultures—in a way that Ortiz (1995 [1940]) called deculturation—and *romanticised*, and hence, immersed into cultural practices, values, lifestyles and gender roles of their host culture—which Ortiz (1995 [1940]) referred to as acculturation—with their beliefs also undergoing significant changes as they drew more from their discourses in their host culture. In her study of Swedish consumers’ negotiation of contesting gender ideologies in the marketplace, Molander (2021, p. 213) also indicated that “even if traditional gender structures tend to run deep, they

can change”. In this mode of gender transculturation, participants have rejected traditional patriarchal ideology and romanticised gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies. Different from the preceding two chapters, participants in this mode also reflected on egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies, demonstrating their rejection of traditional patriarchal ideology.

All these participants have demonstrated their romanticisation of Swedish cultural values and ideals. As their early gender socialisation waned—not unlike the ‘roller derby grrrls’ of Thompson and Üstüner (2015)—informants habituated their views and beliefs drawing from egalitarian and transgressive gender discourses. Similar to Thompson and Üstüner’s (2015, p. 237) notion of ‘ideological edgework’, respondents in this mode of gender transculturation challenge the “constraints inherent to naturalized gender norms” from the home culture to gain ‘social legitimacy’ in their host culture. These respondents also come from a culture with a different primary gender socialisation and cross borders to enter a field where a different form of gender norms and behaviours is expected and legitimised. Thompson and Üstüner (2015) illustrated that the performative practices of consumers can restructure their gendered ideals and reproduce their over-socialised and repetitive gendered practices. This can be paralleled with informants in this mode of gender transculturation. Thus, akin to Thompson and Üstüner (2015), respondents’ primary gender socialisation in this mode of navigation is repressed through repetitive practices because of their necessity to attain more egalitarian or transgressive gendered ideals in their host culture.

This mode of gender transculturation can be perhaps paralleled with the ‘over-assimilated’ position described by Wallendorf and Reilly (1983), although as explicated earlier, these are not the same. They argued that such assimilation was not into the contemporary culture of the host country, but rather the idealised notion of the host culture, as held by migrants before their migrations, from media and global consumer culture. This mode of navigation can also be juxtaposed with ‘the Danish cookie assimilation’ identity position from the post-assimilationist acculturation model by Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), in the sense that it embodies a consumerist orientation that informants in this study use to romanticise, pursue and perform the Swedish way of life. This mode can also be associated with certain facets of the ‘assimilation’ and ‘resistance’ outcomes in Peñaloza’s (1994) post-assimilationist model. Informants in this mode of gender transculturation experienced a high degree of assimilation that Peñaloza (1994) described. Her respondents readily assimilated market offerings within the U.S. consumer culture, specifically those that helped them maintain their social networks. Several respondents in this study demonstrated that they experienced emancipation in Sweden. Participants in Peñaloza’s (1994) model discussed increasing pressures that they encountered, resisting the pulls of their home culture and deromanticising some aspects of their home culture, such as lack of individual

sovereignty and certain holiday traditions, just like informants undergoing ideological osmosis as they romanticise and pursue host cultural ideologies.

Studying poor migrant mothers and daughters from a rural area to Turkish urban squatters, Üstüner and Holt (2007) showcased an ideological battle between those original migrant mothers and their second-generation migrant daughters. They demonstrated how daughters of Bahar—daughters of poor migrant women from rural Turkey—typically pursue the *Baticı* ideology of their host culture, instead of adopting their home cultural ideology like their mothers. In contrast to their mothers who found their new host culture estranged, they dissociated themselves from their cultural roots by deromanticising their home cultural ideologies and embracing their host cultural norms and values. While the mothers used their squatters, their living quarters, as ways to detach themselves from the host cultural ideologies, the daughters, who have barely visited their home cultures, craved to get away from their squatters to immerse into the city life imaginaries. While the mothers attempted to engage their daughters in knitting and using knitted clothes, the daughters, who embraced the host culture's *Baticı* ideology, were reluctant to engage in those home cultural practices, refusing to wear such clothes in their city life. The daughters' attires, for instance, revealed how much they have immersed themselves in the new culture. Despite the glares from their mothers, these daughters dressed up in more revealing clothes. The daughters, in essence, rejected the cultural codes from their rural home to become modern, independent women in line with their host cultural ideology.

Üstüner and Holt (2007) discussed how the daughters ritualised the dominant culture as a myth by performing *Baticı* knowledge, taste, products and experiences. The daughters romanticised consuming products imbued with the host cultural *Baticı* lifestyle, such as using Western products, and in essence, performing the *Baticı* ideologies. They craved participation in *Baticı* cultural experiences, such as visiting European-style cafes and sporting jeans-shirts-boots, a symbol of the *Baticı* youth. They expressed their frustration about not being a part of the *Baticı* lifestyle because of their poor economic conditions. They longed to get married, move away from their squatters and organise their home aesthetics in line with the *Baticı* cultural ideology. They engaged in—what I term—ideological osmosis by showing their repugnance against such knitted clothes and other village aesthetics and claiming to be modern *Baticı* women. Üstüner and Holt (2007) articulated how these daughters essentially consume the *Baticı* and perform it as a myth, an alluring reverie of consuming Western commodities. In a similar vein, respondents—in this mode of navigating ideological tensions—have also pursued the Swedish gender-equal and transgressive ideals as romantic imaginaries by embracing gender equality and transgressive values, norms and practices.

Chytкова (2011, pp. 276-277) illustrated how migrant women from Romania in Italy draw from the discourse of 'modern women', connecting "the myth of the 'Western consumer', whose freedom is defined by the freedom of consumer

choice”, with the “image of the liberty of modern femininity”. The intermingling of these two discourses has proliferated consumer research with the gendered neo-liberal notion of the enterprising woman of the West filled with choice, freedom and opportunities (Catterall, Maclaran & Stevens, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Participants in Chytкова’s (2011) study have demonstrated that the “the concept of liberty is connected both with the freedom from the imposed patriarchal structures and with the freedom to consume” (p. 277). Some of her respondents also indicated that modern women in Italy—in comparison with the traditional woman—have been looked at with self-respect, for instance when they take care of their health or appearance. In this research, participants have similarly showcased how they draw from the discourse of gender egalitarianism and transgression in Sweden.

The rest of this chapter is structured in four parts. The first three sections demonstrate how participants have navigated their ideological osmosis through romanticising, reflecting and rejecting. In the first section, it is shown that some participants have rejected traditional patriarchal and romanticised egalitarian gender discourses. The next section illustrates that they have rejected traditional patriarchal and romanticised transgressive gender discourses. The third section presents how they have reflected on gender-egalitarian and transgressive discourses, signposting their rejection of traditional patriarchal discourse that also pervades their host culture because of neo-liberalism and transculturalism. The last part of the chapter highlights how informants in this mode of gender transculturation engaged in reflexive consumption as a part of their consumption practices in the host culture. Together informants in this mode of gender transculturation demonstrated embracing, adopting and internalising their host cultural norms and values.

## Rejecting Patriarchal & Romanticising Egalitarian Gender Ideologies

Some informants illustrated that ideological osmosis is expressed in their cultural views and beliefs about gender relations in consumption, marketplace communication and society, discerned through their interview narratives. In this section, respondents demonstrated rejection of traditional patriarchal and romanticisation of egalitarian gender discourses by romanticising state-induced Swedish gender equality, experiencing increased freedom in comparison to their home culture, and exhibiting higher tendencies to adopt Swedish norms and values due to a more progressive primary gender socialisation. Throughout this section, they demonstrated that their gender socialisation is constantly evolving as they imbue more of their host cultural norms and ideals.

## Romanticising Swedish Gender Egalitarianism

Several participants demonstrated how they romanticised a lifestyle in their host culture in accordance with the state-induced gender-egalitarian ideology in Sweden. They often expressed how they looked at their new culture with ‘rose-eye’ glasses, revelling in their new host culture with more equal gender ideology. They indicated their osmosis and change in their gender socialisation. Mehzabin romanticised the Swedish culture by articulating how much she liked the differences in Sweden in comparison to Bangladesh. She highlighted that she enjoyed more freedom and became a better person by learning to respect others and to contemplate and reflect more. She pinpointed that people in Sweden are more respectful—and less intrusive—and considerate towards others, which makes it easier for her to overcome the social structures and stigma that women in Bangladesh encounter. As a woman, she relished a more egalitarian gender structure in Sweden. Mehzabin is already a Swedish citizen, and she demonstrated her osmosis by using ‘we’ when referring to Swedes. Analogous to Mehzabin, Zaman also indicated his romanticisation of Swedish gender equality by stating how it has changed him to be more inclusive.

I think I like Swedish culture a lot, you know the sort of freedom and people don't care about others that much. I really like those things. I think moving here made me a better person as well. I learned to be more open and respect people more. I learned to think more and reflect on my actions. ...In Bangladesh, it's like boys are like this, they do this. You are a girl so you have to be careful. You know that's not my duty to be careful. It's a boy's duty not to treat me that way. And here they don't say this to girls. I'm pretty sure there are still a lot of people here as well who are not really gender-neutral, but we don't make them, because we are surrounded by people who are more liberal and more open-minded. (Mehzabin)

But of course, here I see more gender equality than in Bangladesh, that's for sure. In some way, it helped me to be more acceptable. (Zaman)

Anika talked about how gender role expectations delimit women in Bangladesh, and hence, she pursued Sweden as her ideological paradise. She posited that women in Bangladesh are expected to consume products related to fashion that make them appear beautiful such as makeup or jewellery, and domestic domains, such as kitchen and household products. Men, conversely, are expected to buy masculine products like tech gadgets or expensive assets, such as real estate, cars, or apartments. She underscored that a men's presence is required in Bangladesh for major financial decisions, unlike the seemingly utopian—in the eyes of the respondent—Sweden. She also asserted that it was okay for women to be geeky and like ‘tech stuff’ in Sweden, whereas in Bangladesh, they would be disenfranchised and bullied, labelled derogatorily as tomboyish (women who are not feminine). Her embracing of Swedish gender equality and repudiation of Bangladeshi traditional gender norms is evident.

Women in Bangladesh are expected to buy, for example, clothes, jewellery, makeup and kitchen stuff, whilst men are more expected to buy, for example, heavy hard mechanical things like technological stuff, games, or expensive stuffs like assets, cars and apartments. In Bangladesh it would be very rare for women to actually buy an apartment or assets on their own. In Sweden, I think it's very common, regardless if you're a male or female, you will make investments on your own. It's okay to like technological stuff for your geeky sense, but in Bangladesh if a woman is interested in the latest gadgets, then she's perceived to be tomboyish. (Anika)

Faria recalled the parochial gender structures imposed in the Bangladeshi culture, which helped her pursue a Swedish ideological project. She marvelled at the gender balance and positions of women in Swedish society. On the contrary, to highlight gendered norms in Bangladesh, she talked about an advertisement from a brand that denigrates women by reducing them to mere cooks and sexual instruments. Like Anika, her orientation towards gender-egalitarian ideology and renouncing of patriarchal ideology are discernible.

I don't really like ads that always show that the household work is done by women. But I think in Sweden that's quite different, because when it comes to like someone vacuuming, you would see a gender balance to some extent. But one of the ads that I saw when I was young, that really made me feel icky was of a curry masala ad by a brand called Radhuni. A boy came from Dhaka and he went to his village home to his mom and his mom cooked for him, and they were eating together and suddenly she was like now that you are working, you have grown up, now you should bring a *radhuni* [get married and bring a wife who would *cook*]. It was a wordplay on the brand that was the tagline, it like really made me mad. (Faria)

Hasan indicated that he has been influenced by cultural and religious myths in his home country during his upbringing. He articulated several myths, all of which work to reproduce the patriarchal gender structures in Bangladesh by demeaning women suggesting them as objects serving men in the afterlife as rewards for their virtuous life on Earth or elevating men by signifying how they as head of the family should have the head of the biggest fish to symbolise their dominance, or built around the idea that women should not be strong, imposing and dominating but rather submissive. Hasan articulated how such myths are toxic and perpetuate negativity in life in Bangladesh. He romanticised life in Sweden as more positive, a lifestyle that he preferred to pursue. Fahim also highlighted how he values Swedish gender equality, as he explained that life in Sweden is better for women than in Bangladesh because of the patriarchal structures.

Growing up, I was always exposed to these narratives from the elderly, like 'seventy-two fairies would serve you in heaven' or 'the breadwinner must eat the head of the big fish, otherwise it brings misfortunes to the family' or 'ordering your husband around is a sin'. Here, you would never hear these toxic things, all this negativity affects you, here it's more positive. (Hasan)

Traditionally, Bangladesh is a patriarchal society totally dominated by males. So being a male makes life much easier than being a female. In fact, I myself enjoyed more privileges than my younger sister. Now, comparing with Sweden, here equality is everywhere, irrespective of gender. At the family level, both males and females have the same privileges. I prefer and support this Swedish value and societal system. (Fahim)

Fahim also indicated his romanticisation of Swedish gender equality by explaining that his views about gender have changed over time since he moved to Sweden. Talking about the gender-egalitarian ideology in Sweden, Samir specified that he thinks that it is different from his home country's patriarchal ideology as it does not designate women like his wife as 'inferior'. He demonstrated that his ideological orientation is more in tune with Swedish values and state-induced dual emancipation ideology (Molander, 2021). He envisaged that other societies and cultures should also adopt this ideological orientation, rejecting his home culture's patriarchal ideology and indicating his preference for Swedish gender-egalitarian ideology, demonstrating osmosis in his navigation.

To me, the idea of being a man has evolved over time. At present, the man should be like the boy you showed me [in the ad] earlier who is helping in the kitchen. I think attributing some distinctive traits like men should only be like that is not appropriate anymore. (Fahim)

I definitely think it's more equal and I think this is how it should be in other countries. Coming from Bangladesh, I must say that it's really good to not see your female counterpart as someone inferior. (Samir)

Talking about a lack of gender discrimination in Sweden, Mehzabin, once again, demonstrated her romanticisation of Swedish gender egalitarianism. She indicated that despite her more progressive upbringing in Bangladesh—with more freedom and privileges than most women—she still had to be consistently conscious about her gender in Bangladesh. She romanticised Sweden because she felt a certain form of freedom to act without being concerned about her gender. Mahfuz also indicated that gender equality in Sweden means more balanced gender roles for men and women, something he valued, illustrating a similar osmosis.

Gender equality in Sweden [means] you can't discriminate based on sex. If it's proved, it's punishable or you have to pay fines. That's a good thing that it's not accepted in the government and in society. I have not seen gender discrimination in Sweden. Maybe that's the thing I like the most about Sweden. I don't have to think that I'm a girl all the time which I had to do in Bangladesh, even though I grew up with a lot of freedom [in Bangladesh] and I was quite feminist from the beginning, but still it was always there that I am not a man and it's different for me. (Mehzabin)



I think the Swedish system kind of has a default that, from my observation, the large majority doesn't really position men and women too far apart from one another. It's not really difficult for roles to be interchangeable between genders in Swedish society. (Mahfuz)

Shakib romanticised Sweden by highlighting Swedes' transparency, reliability, language skills and lack of racism and repudiated 'a morally corrupt system' of his home culture. He revelled at gender equality, making it easier for him and his wife to raise their children. During the time of the interview, Shakib's wife was expecting, and he seemed to enjoy talking about how Swedish fatherhood can ease his wife's life. Unlike the previous instances, in this case, Shakib identified more with gender-egalitarian ideology and rejecting his home cultural patriarchal system.

Well, they are very transparent, you will find data about how they are spending your taxes. You can get easily information, doesn't matter from which authority. They speak English without hesitation, that's what I loved most here. They don't show any kind of discrimination or racism, compared to the other European countries. And then there is more equality in raising a child between male and female parents, but in Bangladesh, it's completely different, it's mostly the responsibility of the female partner. (Shakib)

On the flip side, Samir talked about 'real men'. He argued that men should be able to do whatever they want, including crying if they feel like it, although crying has been signposted as a weakness, associated with femininity. He talked about how in Bangladesh, he came across a lot of conversations about what real men should or should not do, which he displayed his aversion to, indicating his alienation from traditional patriarchal ideology and immersion into the egalitarian gender ideology. He further denoted those people back home who engage in such conversations as 'uneducated', condescending to their social values by demeaning their knowledge and place in society.

Should men cry? Definitely, if they feel like it. Should they show what they feel emotionally? Yes. I see a lot of communication from friends that real men shouldn't do this or that, in our country. These are really wrong communication. I think it's, you know, uneducated people. (Samir)

Ostberg (2019) argued that our understanding of normalised masculinity is merely a marketplace construction. Furthermore, he claimed that there is a rising demand in the contemporary consumer culture for men to participate in activities traditionally considered feminine and how this contrasts with the traditional model of the 'real man' who was only required to be a breadwinner of the family. This model considerably contrasts with the Swedish model of masculinity. Molander, Östberg and Kleppe (2019) argued how the dual emancipation ideology by the Swedish state has introduced a new model of masculinity in Sweden, referred to as the 'Scandinavian Man'. Born from the myth of fatherhood in Sweden, in 2017, a

“commercial platform Scandinavian Man ([www.scandinavian-man.com](http://www.scandinavian-man.com))” was launched to promote this contemporary model of manhood, locally and globally, through “bi-annual magazine, a website, a radio show, a regular newsletter, an Instagram account, live events, symposiums and a curated pop-up store” (Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019, p. 137). The idea of the Scandinavian Man is to endorse and capitalise on this Swedish masculinity model, embodying gender equality and neutrality and to transmit it to the global marketplace through brands. Samir, in this instance, related more to this notion of the Scandinavian Man, indicating his osmosis towards the egalitarian gender norms.

Some respondents reflected on their immersion into the Swedish culture by discussing their experiences in a sauna, something that they have come across for the first time in their life in Sweden. Fahim recalled how he felt embarrassed and uncomfortable exposing himself in such an environment. However, gradually he understood the importance of accepting such cultural practices for assimilation into the Swedish culture and to be accepted by his Swedish friends and colleagues. Khaled reminisced about his experience in a sauna where he accepted a challenge from his classmates to do something that was unimaginable and gut-wrenching for him, coming from a tropical country and unacquainted with such a low temperature. He performed to simply show his willingness to blend into the crowd—as he indicated how he was the only non-European one among his peers and was at the receiving end of playful banter—and be accepted by others. Second, he also talked about how he continued to engage in playful physical touch with one of his female classmates in a state of undress, something that Fahim thought was inconceivable for someone from Bangladesh. This demonstrated his shift from embodying patriarchal structures into a more egalitarian ideal.

In the beginning, I felt awkward and shy. But over time I realised that I need to accept this kind of open notion if I have to integrate with this society. So, I habituated myself with these kinds of things and became completely okay afterwards. (Fahim)

Once outside of the sauna—in the middle of nowhere, just snow—some of my female classmates were throwing snowballs at me, I was the only non-European, and they were teasing me to accept that I can’t bear this cold. And then they challenged me to snow roll in -22 degrees. To show them that I can, I did and I felt like my heart was stopping, it’s cold, -22 and I am naked and rolling in the snow. And then I had some snow in my hand I rubbed it on one of my female classmates’ back, which I would never imagine doing with my female classmates here, let alone in Bangladesh. And they were not making a big deal out of it, and she was like next time I am fetching more snow and do this to you. They took it as fun, it’s not offensive. (Khaled)

All respondents here have constantly juxtaposed gender ideologies in Sweden and Bangladesh, elevating gender equal ideal in Sweden over their home country’s patriarchal gender ideal. They have all demonstrated that they romanticise and value

Swedish gender equality, indicating their osmosis towards the host cultural values and norms.

## **Emancipation from Parochial Gender Structures**

Chytкова (2011, pp. 276-277) showcased how migrant women in Italy from Romania have experienced “freedom from the imposed traditional, patriarchal gender role”, the “hegemonic structures in society”. This notion of Western women as ‘liberated’ is found in various studies (Catterall, Maclaran & Stevens, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Chytкова’s (2011) respondents highlighted freedom such as the possibility of divorce or increased consumption opportunities. In a similar vein, several informants in this study have talked about experiencing higher degrees of freedom in Sweden compared to Bangladesh. They felt emancipated from incarceration in their home culture’s parochial gender structures.

Talking about brand gender-bending, Sandhu (2017) also argued that women feel less threatened and have more tolerance than men because of their subordinate position in the social gender order and endeavour to achieve gender equality. The excerpt below from Anika demonstrates that the constant objectification and victimisation as a woman in Bangladesh propelled her to understand more about alternative gender ideologies. This can be interpreted that—not only based on Anika but also on other women in this chapter, such as Faria later on—understanding of egalitarian and transgressive gender ideals could be contingent on these individuals’ subordinate position in their home culture and marginalisation that they experienced. However, within consumer acculturation literature, this finding has not been found.

I think it has made me more accepting towards differences, to be honest. Because I think back in Bangladesh, I always felt I did not feel I fit in, to be honest, because I had to comply with more norms than what I accepted or agreed on. And that was quite a big source of unhappiness because if you did not conform to the norms, then you were either humiliated or bullied. In Sweden, now, I don't feel that social pressure. I don't see that social pressure in people around me. I think, for me, it was liberating, to be honest, to come into a culture, where it's much more open. It's a different mindset, different values and I quite like it. (Anika)

Based on Anika’s account, it can be discerned that being accultured in Sweden provided her with a sense of freedom from the ideological constraints she was incarcerated into back in her home country. Accordingly, this liberation helped her acclimatise more with a gender-equal ideal in her consumption practices. She felt a certain surge of power, something that evaded her in her home culture, as she stood here on a seemingly more equal footing with men. Instead of feeling ostracised like in Bangladesh, she felt her ideologies are more attuned to Swedish gender

egalitarianism. This emancipation from a patriarchal gender culture elevated her position in the social gender order as she was accorded more power in her new realm. Mehzabin also highlighted that in Bangladesh she experienced being objectified more than in Sweden. Moreover, she found herself not being able to react to such objectification because of patriarchal structures. In Sweden, she felt she has more power as a woman, and therefore, felt more liberated from the 'male gaze'. Anika and Mehzabin demonstrated emancipation from patriarchal structures by adopting gender egalitarianism ethos in Sweden.

In Bangladesh, most of the guys would stare at girls and then you would see that they were talking to someone and then the [other] guy would be checking me out, that's a really common thing. It's so difficult to talk eye to eye with a guy in Bangladesh as a girl. It's difficult to fight against a guy because society does not want us to. But here it's much easier, you don't have to think about it. But I also had some guys who would do that here as well, [although] less. But I am strong here, even if I see a guy who is checking me out when I'm talking to that guy, I know that doesn't matter, I don't give a shit about the way you look at me you know. (Mehzabin)

Mahfuz discussed the limitations of socio-cultural and religious structures in Bangladesh that prohibit couples to live together or be openly gay and that any marriage has to be blessed by society. He juxtaposed the freedom that he found in Sweden, such as his ability to pursue his own career without the influences of his family or society. He also added that Sweden allows one to live their life as they want and be accepted as they are, particularly in terms of gender. Mahfuz illustrated that he enjoyed such freedom, as he lived together with his European girlfriend—similar to Faria and Mehzabin's articulations about *sambo* in the previous chapter—something that he would not be able to do in Bangladesh. Thus, Mahfuz also demonstrated his osmosis by distancing himself from patriarchal ideal and embracing a more egalitarian one.

You know you can't just live with someone unless you are married. For the union of two people, first of all, you have to be heterosexual, and then it has to be authorised by your family, otherwise, it's a problem. People are free to choose their careers as well. They're free to choose their love lives. They're free to choose their gender and sexual identities. Pretty much anything that goes into a person's definition. In Bangladesh, society and culture are going to define who I am or force me to define myself in a certain way. Here the culture and society will accept me based on how I define myself. (Mahfuz)

Moreover, Anika also talked about how Sweden is a perfect home for introverts like her. She does not prefer to engage in socialisation and feels that she enjoys that freedom in her host culture. In Bangladesh, in contrast, one is expected to socialise with others, and because there are too many people, 'the sense of community can sometimes feel borderline intrusive'. She explained how she connected with the Swedish ideal of individuality, compared to her culture, where everyone is socially

expected to always agree with a leader of a group or an influencer in a community. She found that in Sweden she can give her honest opinion about things, rather than succumbing to the societal pressures of blindly agreeing to opinions. She realised that she can freely express her thoughts here.

Sweden is an introvert's dreamland. You socialise as much as you want, you can keep to yourself, that's all right as well. I come from a culture where the sense of community can sometimes feel borderline intrusive, where there are so many people and it's very important to socialise. In my culture, it's very common for everyone to agree with a leader or an influencer in a social setting, but in Sweden I feel that I really connect to the sense of individuality that Swedes have, which was for me, it was quite liberating. It's not offensive to have your own opinion, to disagree with certain things. (Anika)

Anika discussed her workplace in Sweden where she enjoyed emancipation from patriarchal gender structures in Bangladesh, which made her working conditions miserable. Because of her gender, she was discriminated against by her clients in Bangladesh, as they felt that a woman would not be able to perform as well as a man. She contrasted this with her experience of working in Sweden, where she has not experienced gender inequality. Once again, she reported feeling liberated from this structure because she did not have to provide that additional effort to prove her worth and build her credibility within her workplace, as she was treated as an individual and not a woman.

In Bangladesh, I've experienced situations where I had clients who would rather talk to men than women because they did not believe that a woman can actually provide them with the same level of service. Where I work today, I don't think I've ever felt that men and women were treated unequally. I never had that experience here that because I'm a woman, I was being treated differently or my voice was not being heard or that I need to push and prove myself a lot more, give a lot more effort to build my credibility than what I've felt back at home. (Anika)

Cultural objects, such as clothing, can also be seen as an expression of emancipation for Anika. She expressed that her clothing in Bangladesh mostly comprised cultural attires for women in South Asia, *salwar kameez* or *sarees*. On the contrary, in Sweden, she can dress up in Western attire, which she thought was much more functional and convenient. She claimed that she also exposes more skin by wearing shorter dresses, unlike her covered attires back home because she did not feel that people on the streets of Sweden are ogling her, looking at her with lust or making her feel insecure. Hence, she experienced a sense of freedom, which made her braver, to wear more revealing clothes. This is an agency, which as a woman she did not have in Bangladesh, indicating a regendering of consumer agency (Witkowski, 2004). Beyond religious and cultural reasons, she felt that she needed to cover herself in the streets of Dhaka to not get sexually harassed or assaulted. In a similar vein, Mehzabin also indicated that she enjoyed the freedom of dressing up

as she wanted without having to think about how others would perceive her. She felt emancipated from the patriarchal ideal and norms in Bangladesh that put certain expectations on women to dress in a particular way. Mehzabin did not feel attached to Bangladeshi traditional feminine attires, and she felt the Swedish society provides her freedom to dress as she wants, not in a conventional feminine way. Anika and Mehzabin here demonstrated their osmosis by distancing themselves from patriarchal structures and espousing a more egalitarian gender ideal.

Back in Bangladesh, I used to wear local clothing like *salwar kameez* or *sarees*, after coming to Sweden, I've shifted to what's acceptable here, which is basically pants, t-shirts, blouses and dresses. I also think that I expose a bit more skin in Sweden because I don't feel as much judged as I felt back home. I feel a lot more free or independent in the sense that when I dress up, I don't feel being ogled at. So that made me a bit bolder in terms of how I want to dress, how much I want to show off my skin. A lot of the clothing that I wore back home was not mostly because I wanted to wear them or they were very functional, but it was just to cover myself up for that feeling of safety that I wasn't going to be molested or harassed or basically looked at in a very sexual way, which made me uncomfortable. (Anika)

In Bangladesh, if you are born as a female then you have to act a certain way. You have to have like certain kinds of clothes. You are not accepted in society if you have like different kinds of clothes or you are like treated very weirdly. And here it's more inclusive and that's a good thing. You can identify yourself as a female but you can wear like pants and t-shirts. And I do wear a lot of jeans and t-shirts. I like those kinds of dresses. I am not that feminine in terms of the way I dress up. I don't wear that much makeup because I like it that way. If I were in Bangladesh, maybe I have to also behave more like women because that's how society is. ...I really like that I can be myself and I don't have to think about what others will think about me in terms of clothing and that's what I like a lot. (Mehzabin)

Samir, conversely, also explicated how clothing can also be an instrument of freedom for migrating men. Growing up in Saudi Arabia, he talked about how even men are expected to wear traditional attires such as *shemagh* and *thobe*, whereas the dress code for girls is *abaya*. In Sweden, just like Anika and Mehzabin, Samir and Mahfuz enjoyed that sense of emancipation in being able to wear whatever they wanted without adhering to social norms and scripts and not feeling judged. According to them, this elevated the Swedish culture in terms of gender ideologies reproduced through clothing. Thus, Samir and Mahfuz also expressed osmosis through their emancipation.

In terms of dress, no I was not a big fan of the dress codes in Saudi Arabia like *abaya* for girls and you go with *shemagh* and *thobe*, if you're a guy. So, it's good to just be free with your whatever you like to wear. And you know, no one's spotting or judging you. I think that's much better than in other cultures. (Samir)

I like to dress casually. Thanks to Sweden you don't have to dress very formally, even when you're in an academic institution. (Mahfuz)

In a similar vein, Faria also stated that she experienced freedom in her new host culture. Faria juxtaposed the aspect of reassurance and security that women in Sweden experience, in contrast to women in Bangladesh. She indicated that a young girl in Sweden can take a train alone even when it is very late. The Swedish society offers that confidence and environment for women and other gender identities in Sweden. However, in Bangladesh, women or other alternative gender identities do not enjoy such freedom, as girls are urged by their parents to return home early due to security reasons, even if they are progressive in their views. Faria indicated that women are unsafe and vulnerable on the streets of Dhaka, particularly after nightfall, unless they are in their own cars, as news of rapes in empty public transports has become recurrent. She also mentioned girls in Bangladesh needing to construct an intuition about situations where they would feel unsafe. Analogously, Mehzabin also argued that as a woman she enjoyed more freedom in Sweden than in Bangladesh in terms of being concerned about certain socio-cultural constraints, such as the fear of being sexually harassed. In Sweden, she did not have to think about clothing in a certain way or other gender issues to avoid being harassed, indicating her perceived emancipation. Faria and Mehzabin indicated enjoying more freedom and egalitarian gender structures in Sweden compared to their home culture.

If you are taking a midnight train, you always see one single person, a young girl walking her dog, it might be 12 midnight or something. I think that's what's more important to me, rather than equal payments. Here they don't need to have that instinct or that sixth sense that we had. And it's not always because they are not progressive, but at the same time, they are scared and concerned about their daughter's security. Even if they want that alright both of my kids can stay outside for a longer period of time, it's because of the security. I think that says a lot about society. (Faria)

I think there's more freedom here in terms of clothing and the way I want to be. In Bangladesh, being a female, you have a lot of limitations. You can't be outside, do certain kinds of stuff, behave in a certain way, or travel freely because you are being harassed or molested or even raped, so there are a lot of limitations being women in Bangladesh. But here I can be outside, I can do what I want to do and I don't have to think that I'm a woman and I can't do this thing. In Bangladesh, there are so many gender issues that I had to think about before I did something. (Mehzabin)

Similar to Faria and Mehzabin, Khaled also talked about social security issues in Bangladesh restricting women's privileges, such as staying out late, compared to men. He further added that even as a man he finds more freedom in Sweden by not being restricted to socially constructed gendered roles for men and women. Conversely, Zaman discussed the privileges of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) and how they afforded men certain freedom in terms of social constraints. He

also indicated that in Sweden women have more liberty than men, in comparison with Bangladesh. Samir indicated that he did not enjoy any freedom in terms of his gender moving from Bangladesh to Sweden. However, he observed that his wife experienced emancipation in varying degrees.

I have seen that I can roam around in my area till 8 or 9 pm but my sister can't though, it's because of social security. ...In Sweden, from personal life to choosing your career, there is a wide range of freedom. It used to be that if you are a boy you have to study engineering and girls should study biology, it's not like this here. Here, if today I want to get into a work that usually women do, no one will stop me. But it would not be possible in a more conservative society, there it matters what my profession is, what I wear, what perfume I use, what haircut I have, everything is defined by our society, which is less prevalent in Swedish society. (Khaled)

As a male, I haven't had any problems in my own home country or in Sweden. I think it's same all over the world. So yeah, I'm kind of privileged that I'm a male, I can do whatever I want. I can go outside whenever I want without thinking. In Sweden, I guess, there are some differences in terms of liberty. (Zaman)

I don't see a big difference being a male, but I certainly see a lot of difference for my wife. (Samir)

Nevertheless, true immersion is difficult to achieve for first-generation immigrants. Despite Anika's rejection of traditional patriarchal ideology and adoption of gender-egalitarian ideology, she still felt like an outsider in Sweden. Anika narrated that while she always felt like an outsider in her home culture due to her ideological conflicts with traditional gender ideology, she also asserted that she felt concurrently as an outsider and an insider in the Swedish culture, living in her own bubble, looking at things from coloured glasses but also being able to live more freely as her ideologies corresponded with those in Sweden, compared to Bangladesh.

A: I'm talking from quite an outsider's perspective because I was not happy in my culture. I still don't feel fully integrated into society, I think I have my own bubble that I live in, quite an outside bubble.

I: Did you mean an outsider in Bangladesh or Sweden?

A: Both. I feel like my values are more in tune with how Swedish people think or react. And I really admire it, because till now it has been seeing the Swedish culture with rose eyeglasses because for me my extreme experiences and what I needed is something I felt that I got here. (Anika)

Wu and Kilby (2022) indicated that agency, (dis)empowerment and precarity of immigrant women from Bangladesh are complex and fluid, with constant



negotiations and renegotiations, influenced by the host cultural gender norms. While participants in this section highlighted their increased freedom in Sweden, their emancipation does not necessarily always translate into more empowerment and agency.

Responding to an advertisement by Gillette, Mehzabin talked about the patriarchal gender ideals in Bangladesh that allow gender-based harassment and violence against women. She narrated an example of how a young boy's non-romantic actions were interpreted by their parents as romantic towards young girls and how those parents are cultivating a culture of sexual harassment. This clearly indicated her rejection of such patriarchal discourses, and hence, her osmosis towards a more egalitarian culture.

I get very mad when I see these kinds of stuff that boys will be boys [referring to Gillette's ad on 'toxic masculinity']. No, we have to teach them to be civil, to know how to act with a girl. And it's not okay to do this, harass someone or touch someone without their consent, especially in Bangladesh. I have a friend who has a nephew, and his parents always keep saying that he flirts with every girl, and he is just a kid. The boy's parents saying all the time or posting pictures that he's flirting with little girls. I mean the baby was not flirting with someone, it's just a baby how did he like someone? You are grooming someone who would harass a girl in the future by saying these things. That's how we shape them, as today's boys will be tomorrow's men. So, they have to learn from their childhood to be a good person and respect everyone. (Mehzabin)

Mahfuz talked about growing up with certain privileges as a man in Bangladesh, without realising the privileges were accorded to him by hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). He recalled growing up socialising in certain gender stereotypes and that women were considered transgressive if they stepped outside the gender boundary defined by the social gender order (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018). He reflected that he did not think about his gender in Bangladesh because of his masculine privilege; however, his female friends would constantly have to think about their gender. Such a reflection indicates a change from a patriarchal orientation into a more egalitarian one.

Growing up I understood that a man has a larger share of responsibility than a woman. A man is not supposed to be very emotional or sensitive. A man is supposed to be strong and ambitious, and a woman is supposed to support the man. And I'm not saying that my family was responsible for putting this value in my head. It was more of a social implant, that it's natural for a man to be like that. And if a woman is ambitious then it's even borderline shocking because people don't expect women in our country to accomplish as much as men. But growing up, I personally haven't really felt like there's a big difference. I think it comes with male privilege. Since I was a male, I had to worry about fewer things. So, if I would superimpose my ideas or thoughts to a female friend or colleague or a family member then I would get that feedback that you can afford to think in that direction because you don't have certain

limitations. So that's something that we are not always aware of. But now living in Sweden I would say gender doesn't even really come to my mind that I am a man. (Mahfuz)

Similarly, Mehzabin also indicated that girls in Bangladesh are discriminated and stigmatised and have to abide by a socially scripted set of behaviour. Women in Bangladesh have to be polite and well-mannered; otherwise, they would be labelled and dubbed as dirty or impure (Douglas, 2001 [1966]). In Sweden, she felt detached from such parochial ideals. Mahfuz and Mehzabin signified their osmosis into the Swedish culture by insinuating that egalitarian gender ideology in Sweden allow women to detach themselves from such patriarchal structures.

As a girl, if you shout at someone or speak loudly, you are not a nice girl, you are not well behaved and that is said more about girls than guys. They are allowed to scream at or fight with each other about what's right or wrong. If you see a girl protesting about something that is big news that a girl is doing something and a lot of people would come and say that she's such a bitch and stuff like that. Here it's more about right or wrong, doesn't matter if you are a girl or a guy. (Mehzabin)

Anika also indicated that she was impressed by the personal space that people gave her when shopping. Because labour is cheap in Bangladesh, one would always have someone following them around throughout the store. She talked about how she could have her husband with her when she is using changing rooms to try out clothes in stores and no one would bat an eye. This, according to her, would never be possible in Bangladesh because a man and a woman going into the trial room would be looked upon in a negative way due to the patriarchal system that she rejected in this case due to certain constraints, illuminating her increased freedom.

I think initially what stood out for me was how much distance or space they actually gave you. In my culture usually, during shopping, one person is shadowing you in a store, trying to see if you need something, trying to be helpful, or just keeping an eye on you. Also, in the changing rooms, men and women both are allowed together, I can have my partner with me, and no one would question it here. But in Bangladesh if a man and woman go into a room together, that would be like a lot of things would happen there. (Anika)

Moreover, Mehzabin signposted that women in Bangladesh are viewed as sex objects—as also highlighted by Anika previously—and that donning revealing clothes is perceived negatively because of patriarchal gender structures. She distanced herself from such parochial views about gender, arguing that women should be accorded more freedom as in a more gender-equal society.

In Bangladesh, it is so weird that one of the first things that you [associate with] girls is always for sex and then you see a girl only for sexual reasons. Seeing a girl naked and in a bikini is a huge thing, it's not, it shouldn't be a huge thing. (Mehzabin)

Additionally, Anika also highlighted that men in Bangladesh are considered superior and stronger, as they are assigned more responsibility and parents typically prioritise that their sons get a high-quality education because that would improve their chances of getting a job, which is required to financially look after parents when they grow older. It can be interpreted that she attributed this to the traditional patriarchal ideology that has become entrenched—along with Islamic gender ideology—in Bangladesh. Thus, she repudiated such ideals by embracing a more egalitarian one.

In Bangladesh, men are treated very differently, more superiorly, given more responsibility, believed to be stronger than women. Most parents actually invest in their son's education rather than their daughters' because they believe that the son will act as a future source of stability in the family and even, I think our religion also sort of portrays them or moulds them in such a way. (Anika)

Mehzabin also discussed that socio-cultural and religious norms in Bangladesh socialised her into certain conceptions about gender and sexuality. In Sweden, she does not feel that gender is present and is not treated differently due to her gender. She argued that she does not need to put extra effort to be recognised as equal to men in Sweden—as also explicated by Anika earlier—indicating her emancipation from gender structures in Bangladesh informed by a patriarchal system.

When I was in Bangladesh, I was not religious. But I had some concepts about stuff like homosexuality. The relationship between women and men and how do you perceive that changed a lot after I moved here. Otherwise, and then I really like the thing that you never have to think that you are a woman when you are in a social situation or you are working and stuff no one thinks about it that you are a woman and you are different, you have to be treated differently. That's the thing that I appreciate a lot here. It's not like this in Bangladesh as you have to prove yourself all the time that you're better than men. You are treated differently a lot of the times. That's different and really good here. (Mehzabin)

## **Early Socialisation of Progressive Gender Values**

Several respondents—such as Khaled, Fahim, Anika, Faria and Mehzabin—indicated that their values and beliefs developed during their upbringing and early gender socialisation due to their location, social class, socio-cultural context and values instilled by family and peers, which influenced their acculturation experience. Thus, some respondents demonstrated a higher degree of ideological osmosis owing to their experience of more progressive gender ideologies (Shahriar & Ulver, 2022) in their upbringing and their socialisation in non-dominant and subversive gender norms in Bangladesh. Few informants, like Anika, Faria and Mehzabin, displayed traces of some gender progressiveness in their past, despite growing up within the patriarchal structure of Bangladesh.

I would start by presenting snippets from Faria's vast recollections of childhood stories. Talking about her parents, Faria narrated that her mother was always a step ahead of her father, and even in Bangladesh, she felt normalised about this. Her parents were colleagues in government service. She stated that her mother was very soft-spoken, which is something that typically holds people back from going ahead in their careers in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, despite her father being very outgoing, her mother was promoted a couple of years ahead of him, which was very unusual for a family during that period in Bangladesh, indicating a progressiveness in her socialisation. For instance, government protocols required her father to be seated behind her mother in their official public congregations. While this would be considered very progressive in terms of gender, one would expect that this would hurt her father's male ego, as his wife got ahead of him in work, and would be quite upsetting for him to sit behind her. This was evidently reflected in her maternal grandmother's attitude, as she was annoyed that her own daughter was so successful because she was worried that there would be turmoil in their marriage, which might break up her daughter's family. But Faria recalled how she never felt that he was dismayed by this, rather he supported her in her work. This progressiveness shaped Faria's values and ideologies and helped her get acclimatised with the Swedish gender-egalitarian ideal.

My parents were both colleagues as government service holders and they actually met during this foundation course at the beginning of their career. And during their career, my mom was somehow always a few steps ahead of my dad. She was a very intelligent woman, stood as the first woman in her batch. She was a very soft-spoken kind as opposed to my dad, who is very outgoing. I remember there was this period when my mom got promoted two years ahead of my dad, and due to the government protocols, my dad was always supposed to be seated behind my mom in public gatherings. My grandmom, from my mother's side, she was very pissed off about it, which was typical. But my dad, he was always very supportive of her, I think it was absolutely amazing. I remember he went with her through all the big speeches that she would make, all the policy meetings that they would sit through. I never really felt he felt bad about it, which made it very easy for my mom to go ahead. (Faria)

Faria continued to talk about one of her aunts, who was more educated than her husband, Faria's uncle. While he was also more successful in terms of career and earning, it was also normalised. Once again, Faria highlighted that she was exposed to these limited instances of gender progressiveness throughout her childhood, even beyond her immediate family. She recognised the privilege that she experienced within the confines of a highly gendered structure in society. She also reiterated that because of her privilege and elements of gender progressiveness within her family, she found gender-egalitarian values normal, such as that a man does not necessarily have to be the sole breadwinner of a family. Furthermore, she clearly recognised that by saying that she understood how gender roles are defined in Bangladeshi

society as they have also predominantly shaped her upbringing. Faria embodied here the typical naturalised neo-liberal norm of the individual.

One of my aunts is more highly educated compared to my uncle. But they never really made it an issue, she, in fact, earns a way lot more than her husband, and their kids are also okay with it. I think I am really kind of privileged in a way in how they have brought us up. If we are saying that a man always has to be the breadwinner, I don't really see that myself, maybe because it has something to do with my parents as well. (Faria)

When she was young, Faria liked playing cricket, the most popular sport in Bangladesh. It can be interpreted that, while most boys in the country have, at some stage, played cricket on the streets, it is quite rare to find women engaging in sports during their childhood. Faria stated that her father bought her an expensive set of gear and equipment for playing cricket, something that would definitely attract the ire of her male and female classmates for different reasons. When her father bought a bicycle for her, Faria's great-grandmother was annoyed because—it can be construed that individuals in her generation in Bangladesh typically bring up various myths in conversations—she heeded the myth that cycling can increase height, and because most Bangladeshi men and women are short, it would difficult for a girl to get married if she was very tall. Here, it can be interpreted that a common gendered practice for women in Bangladesh is to get married to a guy taller than them. Hence, Faria, who was merely eight at that time, had to think about constraining her height in the hopes of finding a future match. Moreover, due to unequal gender order, it is perceived to be more difficult for *girls* to get married than men. Nevertheless, she concluded with how her father still helped instil in her those progressive gender norms. However, this showcased how her gender socialisation also involved influences from society's hegemonic norms through her relatives.

I really liked playing cricket, and I remember my dad bought me a whole cricket kit set, which was quite expensive for someone in the third grade. And I remember when I was growing up, compared to my classmates, I was a bit taller and my dad actually bought me a cycle and my mom's grandmother, she was really unhappy about it, because she said “if the girl becomes tall it would be difficult to find a husband for her”, and I was just eight years old at that time. But my dad really pushed me towards learning it. (Faria)

Mehzabin narrated that, similar to Faria, her father has also been a key reason she grew up to be very independent and highly educated. Her father advocated for education for all girls in her family and taught her to move beyond traditional patriarchal gender norms that structure women's roles in Bangladesh. Although she wondered if her father might regret that her progressiveness might have led her to marry a Swede, she asserted that her indomitable spirit from her father was such that he would not be able to subdue her even if he wanted.

My father has always been supportive of me, that his daughter has to do well and no one can control my life. That was the vision he had for me, that I would grow as independent, and I would have a good education and my own life. He's quite educated, so he valued education a lot. He was always supportive towards all my female cousins, like you have to study and not like get married. You can see that I married a Swedish guy and that's not very common for a Bangladeshi girl too. Because I have this spirit that it doesn't matter, I am girl I can do everything that I want. I think, he feels like different right now, he said to my mother that he wouldn't have let me come to Sweden alone. But he couldn't have stopped me either, you know. I feel very lucky that I got to grow up this way. (Mehzabin)

Anika shared about growing up in a household where both of her parents were working, which she clearly stated was uncommon during her upbringing. She juxtaposed her upbringing with her friends, all of whom had a working father and a mother in charge of the household. This demonstrated that she had a very gender-progressive outlook in her family that eventually influenced her values. She stated that her mother was more highly educated and more successful and earned more than her father, akin to what Faria also mentioned. This progressiveness provided her family with more freedom for women. Similar to Mehzabin, Anika pinpointed that she was accorded the freedom to go out alone to coaching centres, hang out with male friends, and even travel for holidays alone or with friends that included boys. It can be construed that girls in Bangladesh, at least during that time, were not permitted to travel outside Dhaka with a group of friends that included boys. She observed that none of her female friends had such freedom, depicting how gender views and beliefs at her home were substantially different from prevailing norms in Bangladeshi society. Similar to Anika and Faria, Mehzabin also highlighted that her upbringing involved gender progressiveness, as she grew up participating in male-dominated sports in Bangladesh and experienced a lot of freedom from her parents, as she was also allowed to travel.

I grew up in a house where both my parents were working, which was actually quite unusual when I was growing up because most of my friends' fathers were working and the mothers were basically taking care of the household. My mother is much more highly educated than my father and I think that is also not very common, plus my mother was also more successful and she earned a lot more. So, in that sense, I think in our household women were given quite a bit of more freedom than what I usually saw around. So, while growing up me and my sister we both were actually allowed to, for example, go out by ourselves, have male friends, travel with them to go to coaching. When I was studying at my university I was actually allowed to travel with my friends and alone, which was usually not the case because a lot of my female friends could not. There were boundaries if there was a male friend or travelling without parents or even hanging out with friends. (Anika)

I didn't grow up as a girl, rather as a human. I was the only girl playing with other guys, like playing football, cricket and everything. Even now I don't think girls do

these kinds of things. I had a really strong upbringing. I never felt like a girl or that I can't do anything. I grew up very independently and I got much independence from my parents. Like I was allowed to go everywhere myself. I go to explore a lot, travel by myself as well. After my HSC exams, I travelled to Sylhet alone, and that's not very common for girls in Bangladesh. I got these opportunities. (Mehzabin)

In the final story, Faria discussed her mother's side of the family. She remembered how her grandmother chastised her sons because all her sons only had daughters and no son, rendering their families without a 'proper heir'. She constantly encouraged her sons to have more children to eventually have a male heir. However, as she grew older, her perception changed when she realised that it was her daughters taking care of her in her old age instead of her sons. It can be interpreted that a common tacit understanding in Bangladesh is that when parents grow older, they would be living with their sons, in their son's family, and be taken care of by their sons. Faria navigated tensions and conflicts during her childhood between her seemingly gender-progressive father and not-so-progressive grandmother.

I have four uncles and all of them have like two daughters, so there is no real heir on my maternal grandfather's side. And my grandmom, she was unhappy about this, always pushing my maternal uncles to have like one more child. But when she was growing old, she ended up living with her daughters. And I remember vividly, before she passed away, she mentioned one of the things she learned from her life is that daughters end up taking care of you, not your sons. She eventually told my maternal uncles you know I'm really glad that you all have daughters, so you have someone to take care of you, in your old age. (Faria)

Sarah, who fell in love online with a Swede and got married to him in Bangladesh before moving to Sweden, explained traces of gender progressiveness in her upbringing that gave her a sense of freedom in Bangladesh. She reminisced how her experiences of consuming prohibited things during her adolescence gave her more freedom and responsibility. She posited that she first watched pornography with her mother, who gave her access by buying her the movie's disc. It can be interpreted that it is an unusual freedom coming from one's parents from a Bangladeshi perspective, particularly for women. She also had her first taste of alcohol from her father, which also can be construed as a very rare practice. First, consuming alcohol is prohibited in her religion and illegal in Bangladeshi culture. Second, women rarely frequent bars where alcohol is served legally or illegally. Third, children are seldom that open with their parents in Bangladesh, where they could have a drink or smoke in front of their parents, let alone share it together; it is generally considered very disrespectful<sup>32</sup>. Nevertheless, such sovereignty from her parents provided Sarah with the courage to talk to her father about marrying someone who would generally be considered an unsuitable groom on various levels, as Sarah

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<sup>32</sup> My interpretation

highlighted – he is from a different religion, a different culture, much older than her, has three adult children and lives in Sweden.

The first time I watched porn was with my mother, she bought the CD. My first alcohol experience was with my father. They gave me that freedom. So, I could walk up to my father and say that I like someone from a different culture, religion, who is older than me, has three kids who are adults, and I want to marry him. I could have eloped, but I got married in Bangladesh. (Sarah)

Furthermore, Mehzabin demonstrated progressiveness in her upbringing by conversing about how she was responsible for engaging in family obligations—which she stated are typically accorded to men in the family—as she was simply more reliable than her brother.

My brother actually struggled a lot. Maybe I got more preference because I was good in school and stuff. He didn't do anything that was responsible, it was me doing stuff like meeting relatives, taking people to the doctors, doing stuffs for others, like the guy stuffs. I was doing all these because my parents found me more responsible. They didn't think that I'm a girl, I can't do this thing. I never felt like he got more preference because he was a boy. (Mehzabin)

In all these instances, respondents demonstrated affinity towards gender-egalitarian ideology due to gender-progressive upbringing and early gender socialisation, despite coming from a system structured by traditional patriarchal discourse.

Informants in this section demonstrated that their primary gender socialisation underwent significant changes as they acculturated into their host culture. Respondents, in this mode of gender transculturation, romanticised Swedish gender egalitarianism and resisted traditional patriarchal gender discourse, as their views and practices became more geared towards Swedish norms and values. Their host culture provided them with opportunities to reiterate and habituate gendered practices that have been 'repressed' (Thompson & Üstüner, 2015) in their home cultural practices. Some expressed that they enjoyed increased freedom in Sweden, while others were more receptive towards adopting host cultural values due to their progressive gender socialisation during their upbringing.

## Rejecting Patriarchal & Romanticising Transgressive Gender Ideologies

Some respondents illustrated ideological osmosis through rejection of traditional patriarchal and romanticisation of transgressive gender discourses by looking at market-mediated gender representations that transcended gender norms and that



disenfranchisement and subordinate position in the gender social order in the home culture has potentially improved their openness to gender transgression and osmosis.

## **Market-Mediated Gender Transgression**

Anika highlighted that the government policy in Sweden is very inclusive, making her feel like an individual, rather than a woman. She discussed that the gender equality policy means that women or alternative gender identities are not discriminated based on gender but provided with equal opportunities to succeed. She drew a parallel with the U.S. culture, where she argued, gender identities and LGBTQ+ issues are magnified, but people are often denied opportunities based on it. She cited the example of the Swedish Armed Forces, which advertised an LGBTQ+ theme communication during Stockholm Pride, called 'We Don't Always March Straight', whereas transgender individuals were not allowed to enlist or openly reveal their sexuality in the U.S. Army until President Biden overturned the policy adopted by Donald Trump. She also talked about the availability of pre-schools in Sweden, which allows women to go back to work after their maternity leave. It can be interpreted that this alleviated one of her concerns about child rearing, considering that in Bangladesh, one can either hire help or have their mother or mother-in-law close by to assist in childcare. Anika demonstrated her romanticisation of gender-transgressive ideology and rejection of patriarchal structures.

Swedish government policies are people-friendly. It does not discriminate between women. It is very female-friendly and enables women to succeed as well as men. There is equal opportunity and benefits. You're not discriminated or denied opportunities because of what gender you associate yourself with, unlike American culture where everyone needs to have an identity but is still denied. Militaries, for instance, have strict requirements in terms of sexuality. In the U.S. Army, you can't actually disclose that you are gay. Also, in Sweden, daycares are available so that women can work. Here it's subtle, inclusive. I feel I have a human voice, not a female. (Anika)

Anika also indicated that the patriarchal gender structure in Bangladesh defines societal gender roles of men and women in terms of their clothing. She juxtaposed that within the Swedish context, women sport more gender-neutral clothing with t-shirts and pants, traditionally associated with men. She recognised differences in men's and women's clothing in Sweden, but argued that such differences are much smaller, as the same shirt and pants or tops and tights may be worn by men and women. She also highlighted that gender transgression is signified by brands merely constructing a feminised version of their masculine clothing. She concluded by stating how to dress up and appear did not stand out for her in Sweden in terms of

gender. Anika, in this excerpt, uses ‘we’ when explaining how people in Sweden dress up. Her emphasis can be interpreted as her manifestation of being a part of Swedish society and owning the culture. She demonstrated osmosis through her romanticisation of the gender transgressive and rejection of traditional patriarchal ideologies.

Where I come from, what a man should wear and what a female should wear is very clearly defined. But if you consider here in Sweden, women still wear pants and t-shirts and everything. The cut might be different but they still wear similar clothing, similar kinds of colours as well. It's very likely that you might actually see a woman wearing a tank top and tights, or a shirt and a pant as a man. A lot of the brands actually come out with a female version of the same clothing here as well. In general, how we dress in Sweden, I think, it does not really catch your eye. (Anika)

Talking about one of her male best friends, Faria recalled his knowledge and passion for clothing in their conversation about the consumption of *jamdani* for example, or how he taught her the nuances to be able to tell the differences between three varieties of *kataan*<sup>33</sup>. She insinuated that in Bangladeshi society, one would not expect a man to be so involved in and knowledgeable about fabrics and fashion and hence associated with femininity, but she claimed that she found it perfectly alright, showcasing her affinity towards gender transgression. Faria also talked about female friends who are transgressing gender norms in Bangladesh by earning more than their husbands, letting the husbands pursue their dreams. She demonstrated that her gendered beliefs are quite different from those of Bangladeshi gender discourses, indicating her ideological osmosis.

One of my best friends, he is like so passionate about clothing, and it's just irritating, haha, but I'm okay with it. I mean we talk about *jamdani*, for example, like he is the one who actually taught me there are three different kinds of *kataan* apparently. And there are women friends that I have who are like the breadwinners of their families, they have their husbands, who are not may be dependent on them, but maybe pursuing their own dream careers, now the women are focusing on earning. (Faria)

Mahfuz demonstrated his immersion into gender-transgressive values by recognising the complexity and multifacetedness of gender. While he indicated that presenting gender on a continuum can be confusing for young people learning more about their gender identities, it is better to have more options than to have none and not being able to identify with how they feel. He indicated his preference for a more transgressive gender ideal, detaching himself from a patriarchal one. In a different way, talking about gender-neutral toys for children from a Swedish magazine advertisement, Mehzabin showed her penchant for such agender values in Swedish society. She argued that children should be allowed to play with any toy they want

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<sup>33</sup> *Jamdani* and *kataan* are fine woven local textiles in Bangladesh.

and that should not be gendered. She demonstrated that her values are more in line with gender-transgressive ideology.

Gender is complex with so many dimensions like, physiological, medical, or genetic science, as male and female bodies and minds operate differently. But then I do recognise that the spectrum has always been there, you know it's actually never been binary. Yeah, I mean we had binary labels, but I think the behaviour was never binary because people were always somewhere within the spectrum. There were women who would take responsibilities for their families, who were earning in very ancient times, who would go to wars. And there were men who were very artistic, very emotional. I guess that's one way the label effeminate came around that someone has a lot of sensitive qualities, a very feminine man. I am appreciative of the fact that people have started to recognize the spectrum. I may not always agree with everything they say because I think there's a lot of learning that has to go into this and it's still very new, very fresh. I think it can be confusing for a lot of people, especially a lot of youth growing up. Now they understand that they have a choice. They're learning about what it means to be somewhere on the spectrum. It's a very blurry, hazy area, but I think it's the lesser of the two evils, it's better to be confused about where you are in the spectrum than to be forced into one of the two stereotypical definitions. (Mahfuz)

I find it really good that children don't learn to play with a certain type of toy based on their gender. If I had children, I wouldn't choose like pink toys or cooking stuff for my girl. They should go to the store and find for themselves whatever they like.... You don't have to be really girlish to be a girl. You can be whoever you want to be. (Mehzabin)

## **Transcending Gender Norms**

Looking at gender-transgressive advertisements, Anika talked about how brands are transgressing gender norms, which coincided with her abandonment of her home cultural values and adoption of the host cultural ones. In the image by Swedish fashion brand Åhlens's 'Break the Clothing Power Structure' campaign, she noticed that men were sporting traditionally feminine attires such as a skirt or a blouse, adopting a 'softer stance', traditionally associated with females in brand communication. However, women sporting traditionally male clothing appeared more powerful. She recalled being in Sweden and noticing the campaign when it was launched and how she felt it was a defining moment for her in terms of seeing the normalisation of gender transgression. Anika, in this instance, espoused gender-transgressive ideology.

Here, the men are wearing skirts and blouses and the women are wearing male outfits. It is quite interesting actually because the men have a softer stance, attitude and body language than this woman with the long coat who has this sense of a power pose. I was in Sweden when the Åhlens ad was launched and for me that was quite shocking,

it was the first step towards seeing the normalisation of the clothing between men and women. (Anika)

However, in the advertisement by the Swedish fashion brand MQ, she found a black man, sporting a skirt, with a power pose. Comparing this image and the Louis Vuitton (LV) advertisement—where Jaden Smith was wearing a skirt—she found it more interesting because the adult man was dressed in a ‘schoolgirl’ outlook. She argued that the LV image looks very normalised because Jaden Smith appeared very feminine, whereas in the MQ ad, the model appeared very masculine. She indicated that it is expected that a high-end fashion brand such as LV would push gender norms and boundaries, making it very banal and, hence, negating gender transgression. The MQ image, however, created a lot of contradictions within Anika. She talked about the contextual surrounding in the image, which showcased dark woods and colours as well as the model’s powerful pose, emanating success and accomplishments. However, this contrasted with his appearance, as he was sporting a grey-coloured skirt completed with a shirt, a tie and matching socks, which was very formal. Thus, while both advertisements depicted men in women’s clothing, it seemed that the man in the MQ advertisement stepped outside the dominant gender boundary because of the stark contrast and contradiction in the imagery, and hence, garnered a lot of attention (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018), while Jaden Smith’s feminine demeanour in the Louis Vuitton image was identified as more subtle.

The MQ ad is very interesting, how they try a schoolgirl look on an adult man. The Louis Vuitton one does not stand out for me partially because you expect high-end fashion brands to push norms and shock you. But in the MQ ad, if you look into the whole setup and the environment of the room, it has a very strong powerful look with all the dark woods and the colours, even the posture shows off a very successful man, but his clothing is representing something else, he's wearing a skirt, so that I think is a very interesting contrast, creates a lot of contradictions in my head. But it would be interesting if a woman was sitting in the same setup wearing pants and a suit, I don't think it will stand out to me as much as this is. It will not create so much tension or contradictions as this image. This sort of now makes me wonder that even from a clothing perspective gender stereotyping is much stronger towards women than for men. It would have been a very sexualised ad then if I would not have perceived her as a successful woman. (Anika)

She continued that, if the tables were turned, and if there was a woman sitting there wearing a pant, clothing traditionally associated with masculinity, then that image would have been mundane. She expressed her realisation that this meant gender stereotyping is stronger towards women than men because a woman appearing in men’s clothing would be perceived as normalised as women frequently dress up in that way already, whereas a man wearing a skirt in a formal environment is still not normalised, and hence, stands out with conflicting tensions. Anika argued that, in

such a transposition, the image would have appeared very sexualised instead of a successful woman sitting in an office. This desexualisation of the man in this advertisement, hence, illustrated that men are less sexualised in societies. Embracing gender-transgressive ideology enabled her to advance such a critique against the LV advertisement.

Some informants articulated that gender transgression can help improve the representation of alternative gender identities, indicating the adoption of Swedish gender-transgressive values. Samir stated that gender-transgressive advertisements are attempting to ‘break barriers’ by improving representation for those marginalised gender identities who are not adequately represented in societal imageries. Samir argued that these images could help others who wanted to identify in the same ways. Fahim recalled a marketing communication by Hansa, with gender-bending (Avery, 2012; Azar, Aimé & Ulrich, 2018; Sandhu, 2017; Stevens & Ostberg, 2011) clothing. Reiterating the tagline of the commercial, analogous to Samir, he also posited the importance of breaking barriers by thinking outside the box through these gender-bending communications. Samir and Fahim demonstrated their affinity towards gender transgression, moving away from patriarchal discourse.

People who feel they should be represented in this way and they're not or they are not being able to do that so these brands are probably trying to break barriers here. A lot of people could get help from these kinds of communications. (Samir)

Recently, I've seen a gender-neutral ad by Hansa where it was shown that a guy was wearing girl's clothes and a female wearing guy's clothes. A catchline was also shown in the ad: 'Rules are for fools'. It really sensed to me that if you were a fool, you would follow the rule. If you are smart, you would think outside the box. (Fahim)

Talking about her media consumption, Anika recalled how all hosts and makeover experts of the popular television series Netflix's *Queer Eye*—the Fab Five—are gay, reflecting on the strong representation of the LGBTQ+ community in the show. Specifically, she mentioned Jonathan Van Ness, the grooming extraordinaire, who often cross-dresses as a female, which, to Anika, illustrated the acceptance of gender transgression and helped her normalise gender-transgressive images. She reminisced about an episode of the show when the hosts helped a vulnerable girl with acceptance issues by helping her become more comfortable with herself and getting her to accept her own representation as gender fluid. Anika, in this instance, espoused gender-transgressive ideology.

In *Queer Eye*, all the five hosts are actually gay, and there is this guy called Jonathan, who basically is the hairdresser, the fashion and the beauty expert. And he dresses up sometimes as a woman. I think that sort showcases the acceptance of this sort of images nowadays. I was watching this episode where this girl wanted to dress up as gender fluid but had a lot of acceptance problems, but these guys, who have different

beliefs by the way, they helped her accept herself, you know, helping her get a complete makeover and become more comfortable in her own representation. (Anika)

Entertainment products like *Queer Eye* can disseminate ideologies of acceptance and inclusiveness in Swedish society because of the proliferation of global values and cultural norms. Global consumer culture enables the proliferation of ideologies among the respondents while concurrently providing them with anti-liberal values. Due to such transculturation influences, respondents were provided with a traditional gender ideology, hegemonised in the marketplace and a gender-transgressive ideology emerging in the marketplace, particularly from more progressive countries. This provided informants with the opportunity to balance their ideological tensions. Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) demonstrated how, apart from home and host culture, global consumer culture acts as a significant force in influencing consumer acculturation practices.

## **Disenfranchisement and Subordination**

As discussed previously in Anika's case—in the first interview excerpt presented in the 'Emancipation from Parochial Gender Structure' sub-section in the previous section—Faria showcased that she looked at gender-transgressive advertisements and exhibited values comparatively more in line with gender transgression differently from some other respondents. While most male informants have not reacted positively to men doing makeup, women did not necessarily react in such an aggressive way. This can be attributed to men's and women's different positions in the social gender order, making women more normalised to gender transgression. Looking at images from Covergirl and Maybelline, Faria talked about her appreciation for the effort it takes to do good makeup and how it has normalised the images of men modelling for makeup brands.

Knowing how to do really good makeup, it's a lot of work, it takes labour and hours to get it right. And I'm so bad at it. So, I really appreciate when I see really good makeup. I think the men [in the images] they are looking absolutely awesome (Faria)

Avery (2012) demonstrated that owing to the politics and power imbalance in society, women's gender-bending consumption to men threatens men more than female-gendered brands targeting the opposite gender, triggering men's countervailing responses. Men's privileged position in the gender structure due to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) means that they have more to lose, and as demonstrated by Faria. Women are, hence, more receptive and open towards acceptance of more progressive gender ideologies. In a similar vein, Mira highlighted her reasons for being more gender transgressive as she encountered more disenfranchisement in Bangladesh for her gender and body. Thus, it was easier

for her to embrace more transgressive gender norms in Sweden. Faria and Mira have adopted gender-transgressive ideologies, rejecting patriarchal norms.

This is embarrassing, but you know, it is difficult to shop for women's undergarments in Bangladesh because of all the men in the shops. Here you don't have to tell a man the size of your breasts and have them gawk at your chest. For someone like me with, well you know, a bigger chest, it is more awkward. Here, it's so much easier. (Mira)

In this section, respondents have demonstrated their ideological osmosis through their narratives about consumption and marketplace communication. Similar to the themes in the preceding sections, these are presented in relation to the marketplace resources. Respondents in this section rejected traditional patriarchal gender discourse, as they romanticised gender-transgressive discourse. This was done by looking at market-mediated gender-transgressive representations that transcended gender norms. Finally, participants indicated that their subordinate position in the gender order and marginalisation in their home culture, made them more receptive towards gender transgression, facilitating their osmosis.

## Reflecting on and Romanticising Egalitarian & Transgressive Gender Ideologies

Some participants illustrated ideological osmosis by reflecting on gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies found in the host culture and posed advanced critiques of the pervasiveness of gendered expectations, inequality, stereotyping, and lack of commodification in Sweden. Their reflections indicated their romanticisation of these egalitarian and transgressive gender discourses.

### Disenchantment of Gendered Expectations

Anika and Samir demonstrated resisting the unequal gender structures reproduced in Sweden, despite the overwhelming evidence of gender-egalitarian ideology. Anika explained that while gender is more equal in Sweden than in Bangladesh, there are still normative gendered expectations in the Swedish culture. She instantiated this with how she observed girls in Sweden still taking time and effort in their clothing and appearances to maintain their appeal and beauty for their relationships. She also stated that although more women are running for and rising into leadership positions (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018) in corporations and governments, men still hold the top leadership positions in Sweden. Samir, conversely, argued that gender transgression is merely repackaging and normalising men's clothing on women. However, the other way around, men sporting

traditionally women's clothing is still not very visible. This once again highlights that neo-liberalism reproduces traditional gender structures.

I think it is much more equal than what I'm used to but there are still some expectations in terms of how you should look, personal relationships and appearances. I see that a lot of women making a lot of effort to look good, to keep up that persona of being attractive for a longer time than men would. In a corporate setup, from a power play perspective, I feel like men and women have fairly more equal voices but it's actually still the men holding the top positions. (Anika)

I think it's very common to see women wearing dresses that traditionally have been associated with the male gender, that's common. But vice versa, a male wearing something that has been connected with females, that we don't see a lot. (Samir)

Mehedi argued that, in Bangladesh, only certain men's clothing on women are normalised—such as t-shirts—whereas less common clothing such as *lungi*<sup>34</sup> is still not well-accepted, despite the attire's history of being worn by women in minority cultures. Contrarily, any women's clothing on men is completely unacceptable with gender-based derogatory insults hurled at the wearer. However, Western gender transgressive advertising only promotes those normative men's clothing as gender-neutral. According to Mehedi, even in Sweden, men are not seen donning feminine attires such as frocks. However, in his reflection, Mehedi romanticised embracing gender transgressive ideology and also a rejection of patriarchal norms.

In Bangladesh there was an ad where the female model was wearing something that looked like *lungi*. Many people criticised it just because her dress was similar to the traditional cloths of boys. We can see the opposite side of the picture too. A boy is posing wearing something like *saree*. You can find that in various fashion shows in Bangladesh. People then call that boy third-gender if he wears a saree. Often boys' *pyjamas* are similar to the *churidar*<sup>35</sup> of girls. Then we call him half-ladies. Even if the models are very much manly, we criticise them. I think except the traditional dresses there are many dresses those you can't differentiate on the basis of gender that can be worn by anyone, like t-shirt. Here most of the ads are showing comfortable clothing such as sweaters and t-shirt, anyone can wear these. It's not acceptable for boys wearing a frock. Society won't accept it. Even in Sweden you won't find a boy wearing a frock. If your wife wears your t-shirt you will feel that's ok. *Lungi* was the cloth of women, gradually it became the clothing of men. You can still find native women wearing *lungi*. If we can accept these then I think our society can move towards gender neutral clothing. Of course, these ads can spread awareness about it. At the end of the day, it's us who need to come forward to build a gender-neutral society. Portraying homosexuality and non-binary is a positive sign. It's not possible

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<sup>34</sup> A traditional South Asian men's attire that resembles a skirt.

<sup>35</sup> South Asian tight-fitting pyjamas, traditionally worn by women, but now also by men.



in Bangladeshi society but it's possible in Swedish culture. Your clothing depends on your personality not your gender. (Mehedi)

Similar to Anika, Khaled argued that women in Sweden are still more conscious about their appearance and spend more time, effort and money on maintaining their looks. He recalled how female drivers of garbage trucks appeared in the same adornment as they would for hangouts or parties, whereas men are less concerned about their looks during their work. However, Khaled demonstrated his osmosis towards the Swedish culture by indicating that despite such disenchantment of gendered expectations and behaviour, he is inspired by how the work itself is not gendered anymore. Molander (2021) evinced that gender roles and expectations in Sweden are not necessarily very egalitarian, despite the state-induced ideology of dual-emancipation. Nevertheless, this also goes on to highlight how deeply entrenched patriarchal structures are even in more progressive societies, and how feminist and LGBTQ+ movements have a long way to go.

I think females are more conscious about what they wear. Even at work—not that there is any relationship of appearance with work, which I came to realise in Sweden—I have seen women who come to work with a lot of ornamentation, in makeup and dressed up. Here, I have seen huge garbage trucks driven by women, who are so dolled up that you can directly take them to a party. Men in the same profession seemed reluctant to embellish in the same way. While in the evening in pubs or outings, both men and women dress up in prim and tidy ways, but in the workplace—and I work with a lot of women—I think women are more concerned about their appearance. But it's also eye-opening and inspiring in that sense that these huge trucks are driven by a woman, and it feels great to realise that even my sister can work in these professions. (Khaled)

Conversely, Fahim demonstrated a lower degree of attachment to the Swedish culture. While he accepted the prevalence of gender transgression and egalitarianism in Sweden, he posited that these are still in the realm of marketing communication and that real social change still has a long way to go. This can be interpreted as that gender transgression is merely commodified in the marketplace, without inducing actual changes.

Though Sweden is a top gender-neutral country, this kind of dress [MQ] is yet to be appropriate in the professional work culture of Sweden. A guy wearing a skirt in the live meeting would raise eyebrows and might make others uncomfortable. ... Though gender neutrality is promoted here, you wouldn't find very much transgender in parliament and governmental institution. (Fahim)

Expressing her disenchantment of gendered expectations, Faria talked about how brands, with their capitalistic agenda, are exploiting consumers. She exemplified this with an instance of buying gifts for women. She stated that when she searched the Internet for gifts for a female friend, all the search results returned were heavily

gender-stereotyped, such as perfumes and jewellery. She exclaimed that corporations who designed these brands and algorithmic manipulations elevate gendered products in their search engine optimisation by returning results more appropriate for women. Scholars have highlighted that big data and algorithmically powered computational analytic systems legitimise algorithmic manipulation of consumers and deceitfully present it as consumer empowerment (Airoldi & Rokka, 2022; Carah & Angus, 2018; Darmody & Zwick, 2020; Kozinets, 2022; Ulver, 2022; Wilson-Barnao, 2017). Hence, corporations, including search engine companies are reproducing traditional gender structures.

They are exploiting us definitely. See if we google and try to find something, like a gift for a woman, it always returns the typical list of perfumes and jewellery and so and so. They never really see the fact that even a woman would like to buy a pocket flask for liquor, for example. I bought one for one of my girlfriends, she lives in Canada and it was really difficult for me to find something, which looked kinda nice. This is another problem, like looking nice and a flask, it doesn't go together. It's always like, a rugged thing, it comes with skulls and everything, I don't want skulls for her! And I think also branding always makes a woman look very calm and quiet, naive and sweet, pink and red and white, which is not always the case, so I think that's what should be different, in the future, I hope. (Faria)

Faria found it annoying that a pocket flask for liquor cannot be a nice present for a woman. Through this, she first demonstrated how traditional gender ideologies are upheld in the capitalist marketplace. Second, importantly, being a woman from Bangladesh, where drinking is *haram* for everyone, and even more so for girls, who are referred to as without any morals and purity if they engage in alcohol consumption, she was looking for a liquor flask. This illustrated that her ideological orientation is far off from her home culture's gender ideals. She also mentioned that these liquor flasks are often embedded with masculine designs such as skulls and ruggedness, demarcating them as masculine products. This, she claims, does not go with femininity, because gendered products for females are associated with calm, quiet, naïve, and sweetness in a palette of red, pink and white colours. In essence, she is identifying gender stereotypes in the marketplace—which have been proliferated by algorithmically-powered market-controlled media ecosystem (Ulver, 2022)—and thus, the adoption of gender-egalitarian and transgressive values.

Talking about consumer identity work, Faria highlighted that marketplace representations can impair men and women. She indicated that the Swedish fast-fashion brand H&M has launched a new 'curvy high waist jeggings' that excludes women who are not curvy, promoting unrealistic body ideals. Similarly, the Swedish clothing brand Dressmann has a separate store for plus-size men, which she once again argued, differentiates and, hence, separates and discriminates those who have to shop from Dressmann XXL. Buying a pair of curvy jeans made Faria

very conscious about her curves, just like buying from a plus-size store would make a person more conscious about their weight.

Mass people don't really have these kinds of figures, at the same time, H&M has now started this line called curvy jeans or something. But when you buy a pair from a curvy jeans section, at the back of your mind, in your subconscious, you do feel that I am buying curvy jeans. But that's not how it should be. It should be just jeans. I am not saying that it's always women who are portrayed in perfect figures or physiques, the same goes for men. I mean you can have like a tummy and that's okay. Why do I have to go to Dressmann XXL, why can't I go to this normal store? (Faria)

Consumers' identity work can alter marketplace structures to suit their own collective interests. Scaraboto and Fischer (2013) demonstrated the institutional practice of segmenting female consumers into 'petite', 'missy/junior' and 'plus-size', which paved the way for the formation of a collective identity based on body size. Similarly, Faria also indicated how brands such as H&M and Dressmann have segregated consumers based on their body size and shape and influenced their perceptions of what is normal. This discursive distortion can collectively work towards the political goal of challenging the 'stigmatising socio-cultural status quo' by altering the marketplace culture (Thompson, 2014). Consumers seek the collective support of others who share their collective views and beliefs to resist stigmatising brand meanings (Avery, 2012). Ulver (2019a) also investigated the relationship between consumers' identity work and how it can transform and create markets. She looked at how consumers, who are initially content with their consumption, become discontent due to a lack of validation from others in their social groups dismissing it as dull, ordinary and mundane. Those consumers elevate their consumption field status to more socially significant, subsequently and inadvertently bringing about changes in the market.

## **Reproduction of Market-Mediated Commodification**

Respondents have argued that the commodification of gender transgression remains within representations in marketplace communication but is not subsequently reproduced in market actors' practices. Thus, the marketplace has failed in its commodification because retail spaces and marketing are still highly gendered. Shakib argued how, despite overpowering indications of gender transgression, they still reproduced gendered structures, which are deep-rooted and less prone to change. He indicated that fast-fashion brands promote gender-transgressive ideology through their marketplace manifestations, but in their retail stores, they still maintain a very gendered segregation of their clothing lines. He reiterated how this is merely a capitalist grab to generate revenue by creating a new market segment. Zaman, conversely, mentioned how his gender is evident when he buys

clothing. He argued that while brands might be transgressive in their communication, they are still highly gendered in the retail sphere.

All these items are designed in a way that both men and women can wear, but if you go to H&M or any other big clothing shop, you'll find male and female separate sections. So, they are trying to create another section, to sell all these products, that they can sell by not investing more and encouraging people to buy the same clothes for both. (Shakib)

I always see the sections for men and women and it's almost present in every shop. So, it is pretty easy to distinguish. When you go to H&M, you see this is for him, this is for her. When I buy, I try to look for men's listing. And those things are kind of arranged in one place than the female ones. (Zaman)

Mehzabin highlighted the prevalence of systematic sexism that still exists in Sweden. She recalled an example when she moved to a new apartment. While the grocery store sent marketing communication targeting her—assuming that domestic and household decisions would be taken by a woman—communication from realtors was sent to her husband, presuming that men are in charge of making big real estate or housing decisions. Mehzabin indicated that even if the Swedish state promoted a gender-equal ideology, in reality, gender stereotyping is still ubiquitous in the marketplace.

Recently when we moved to a new apartment, there were some leaflets that we got from Coop and ICA and some leaflets from realtors. But the interesting fact is that all the leaflet that we've got from Coop or ICA, came in my name and the others that came from the realtor was in my husband's name and that bothered me a lot. I found it very weird and I didn't like it. I didn't think that it was okay that every one of them from groceries came in my name, whereas realtors were in his name, we both pay equally for and share the expenses. We make decisions together, so why would I get it, because I am a woman? That's very sexist, you know. I would say systematic sexism still exists. People don't maybe think about it much, but it is there. (Mehzabin)

## **Pervasiveness of Gender Stereotyping**

Many participants discussed the pervasiveness of gender stereotyping in Sweden, despite more equality and transgression. It can be argued that their osmosis enabled them to discern such perpetuation of gender stereotypes in the marketplace. Talking about gender-transgressive marketplace manifestations, Anika and Samir showcased that gender structures and stereotypes are still being reproduced within the confines of these transgressive advertisements. Looking at gender-neutral children's toys advertisements from a Swedish Christmas catalogue by Top-Toy—a Danish parent company of BR-Leksaker and Toys “R” Us—Anika and Samir highlighted that although boys and girls are engaged in playing together with toys

representing household chores such as steaming, cleaning and ironing, they still observed elements of gender stereotyping. For instance, in terms of stereotyping using colours, a girl was holding a pink vacuum cleaner, whereas a boy was holding a blue one. Thus, even if the brand claimed to be gender-neutral, it still failed to take certain gender stereotyping out of the equation.

And here I actually see a lot of togetherness and friendship moments, doing chores together. But I see a bit of gender stereotyping from the colour perspective. While the girl is holding a pink vacuum cleaner, the boy is holding a blue one. It's not on the face, but gendered activities are still happening. (Anika)

It's gender neutral, the male and the female kids doing the ironing or steaming. But in case of the vacuum cleaners, the baby girl is using a pink one and the baby boy is using a blue one. I don't really believe in the system where boys shouldn't play with dolls, that they should always go for cars or like guns. But I think it's up to the kids, whatever they want to play with. I shouldn't as a parent be concerned about this. (Samir)

Samir reiterated that he did not believe that boys should only be limited to gendered toys such as cars or guns and should be allowed to play with dolls for instance, which are associated with girls. However, he added that kids should be left alone, so that they can be themselves and play with whatever they want. This can be interpreted in the sense that kids should be allowed to choose whatever they enjoy playing with, be it gendered or gender-neutral, indicating an osmosis towards more gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies. However, because societies are structured by a social gender order, brands advertising gendered products might induce kids to make gendered decisions. Nevertheless, Anika and Samir signposted that neo-liberalism mediates gender structures, even in gender-transgressive marketplace representations.

Looking at gender-neutral advertisements from fashion brands, Anika insisted that gender stereotyping could be reproduced through colour and appearance. She indicated that some advertisements highlight neutrality through clothing but still manage to showcase gendered aspects through their bodily appearances. She stated that in Zara's Ungendered or H&M's Unisex collections, one can readily identify male and female models because of their bodies and appearances, such as hair and body shapes. However, in the case of Diesel's gender-neutral couture, it was truly neutral because one could not differentiate between the man and the woman due to their same haircut and bodies. Nevertheless, Anika argued that not imposing gender neutrality is essential. Looking at Maybelline's 'The Boss Life with Makeup Shayla and Manny Mua' campaign, she said:

Colour could be one dimension of gender-stereotyping, clothing could be another and appearance. So, in these ads [H&M and Zara] they're trying to neutralise the clothing aspect. But there are some [visible] parts for example from an appearance

perspective. They're not trying to force it. The man still looks like a man, and you can still just distinctively say that this is a woman, right? Here [Diesel], the first thing that I notice is both the men and the women have the same amount of makeup, the hair looks similar and the face looks similar. I can't basically specify if I'm looking at a man or a woman based on this advertisement because I don't see a lot of elements of typical stereotyping. (Anika)

Talking about Manny Mua—an Instagram makeup vlogger and a male spokesperson for the makeup brand—Anika indicated that he does not have his conventional 'stubble' that defines him. She subscribed to and watched a lot of makeup tutorials and YouTube videos from Manny Mua and she realised instinctively that Manny Mua's stubble, which is evident in his makeup tutorial, has been digitally removed from the advertisement. This, she argued, has been done to make him look cleaner-shaven and feminise his features so that it does not conflict with the brand's feminine essence. Hence, even gender-transgressive advertisements reproduce traditional gender norms because capitalist brands still want to keep their product gendering.

It's interesting that Manny Mua doesn't have his signature stubble here. He usually has this like stubble on his face that has been edited out here for some reason. He looks very clean, to make it look more feminine because Maybelline is an extremely feminine brand. (Anika)

Looking at H&M's and Diesel's advertisements, Anika highlighted that the female model wearing a heel and the male model wearing a shoe reproduce a neo-liberal normalised version of gender differences. In this instance, she moved on from her previous argument about enhancing the differences between genders to identifying how gender-transgressive images can also reproduce stereotypes.

So, if I look into the H&M ad for example, I see that the girl is wearing a heel, whereas the man is still wearing a shoe. So, there are still some elements of gender stereotyping. But if I consider the next ad that you've shown me of Diesel, that for me is a lot more gender-neutral in the sense that you're not trying to stereotype. (Anika)

Anika exemplified this with an advertisement of a sanitary napkin in Sweden that challenged the normalised version of showing blood with blue colour in the commercial so as not to offend mainstream consumers, including men and women who find it awkward to talk about menstruation. Such stigmatised practices were challenged in the commercial that showed blood in red colour, simulating reality. Anika, through this example, also demonstrated how challenging stigmatised practices through transgressions can be difficult and not well received by certain groups of mainstream consumers.

I remember there was this sanitary napkin ad that showed the colour red in the pad. A lot of these sanitary napkin ads show the colour blue in the pad to not make it very blatant. Women have periods and we're all adults, and blood is red, it's very normal to have that image shown. I didn't know why people were reacting to it or something, but I know that a lot of people got very embarrassed about it. They were like looking in different directions. It's okay to make jokes for periods and all that stuff, but it's not okay to talk about it normally, even here, so that I find very weird. (Anika)

All these respondents have demonstrated their cynicism in dealing with issues of morality. Scholars in CCT have approached consumer morality as a part of consumer resistance (Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 2002; Izberk-Bilgin, 2010; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Mikkonen, Moisander & Firat, 2011; Peñaloza & Price, 1993). Studying a Swedish online fashion community and drawing on the ideation of modern cynicism, Bertilsson (2015) conceptualised the notion of consumer morality as a form of consumer cynicism. He demonstrated how consumer morality is expressed through cynical discursive practices as consumers become sceptic about their own selves, other consumers and the marketplace. However, Bertilsson (2015) also highlighted that consumer cynicism does not lead to constructive consumer resistance. The author indicated the presence of a morality of cynicism within the bastions of contemporary consumer culture. In their ecofeminist analysis of environmentally sensitive women, Dobscha and Ozanne (2001) also explored how consumers expressed cynicism against business and marketing practices. In a similar vein, Mikkonen, Moisander and Firat (2011) interrogated consumer cynicism in digital environments by studying anti-Christmas websites. Ulver-Sneistrup, Askegaard and Kristensen (2011) also explored consumer moralism against the backdrop of everyday, ordinary and mundane consumer resistance.

In this section, respondents have reflected on gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies and argued that influences of patriarchal structures remain pervasive in Sweden. They critiqued that despite the imagery of gender equality, gender can still be unequal—although still more equal than in Bangladesh—even in Sweden. Through their reflections informants demonstrated that they have become more reflexive (Giddens, 1991) and knowledgeable about the marketplace. Their reflections could be construed as romanticisation of gender egalitarianism and transgression because they were able to discern the lack of these gender structures. Conversely, their identification of these egalitarian and transgressive discourses could also be interpreted as their willingness to evade these discourses, hence rejecting patriarchal gender structures and demonstrating their ideological osmosis.

Overall, in this chapter on ideological osmosis, participants have demonstrated that their primary gender socialisation from Bangladesh underwent a change as they were exposed to more gender-equal and transgressive norms and practices. The marketplace provided them with an institutional way to develop these latent capacities (Thompson & Üstüner, 2015) to bring changes to their gender ideals. The

respondents have demonstrated that they rejected traditional patriarchal ideologies and romanticised gender egalitarianism and transgression, showing their osmosis. They have also reflected on the latter by critiquing patriarchal structures permeating their host culture. This could be interpreted as a rejection of such traditional gender discourses while showcasing the power of transcultural, neo-liberal and global consumer cultural influences that continue to proliferate the patriarchal systems even in more gender-equal societies. Now, moving on from marketplace narratives, I will discuss a specific form of consumption practice that participants in this mode engaged in.

## Reflexive Consumption Practices

As discussed in the previous section, respondents in this mode demonstrated high reflexivity. Based on their narratives, informants engaging in ideological osmosis, in their navigation of contesting gender ideologies, are more likely to employ reflexive consumption practices to immerse in their new host culture. They often attempted to manipulate (Holt, 2002) through alternative consumption practices, avoiding mainstream products and brands. They are concerned about ethical issues and have moral and activist motivations (Portwood-Stacer, 2012). Their new host culture provides them with the resources, knowledge and passion to influence the market. Informants usually move on to issues which individuals in their new host society are concerned about. Participants' reflexivity demonstrates their osmosis as their values and practices become more in line with their host culture, which is a post-modern Western culture. Giddens (1984; 1991) highlighted how individuals in late modernity are characterised by reflexivity as they become more knowledgeable agents. Giddens (1991, p. 14) argued that individuals construct a form of 'reflexive biography' which acts as a script that shapes the way they view themselves when they are confronted with "day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to wear and what to eat". According to Giddens:

The reflexive monitoring of activity is a chronic feature of everyday action and involves the conduct not just of the individual but also of others. That is to say, actors not only monitor continuously the flow of their activities and expect others to do the same for their own; they also routinely monitor aspects, social and physical, of the contexts in which they move... [Actors] maintain a continuing 'theoretical understanding of the grounds of their activity'. (Giddens, 1984, p. 5)

The social conventions produced and reproduced in our day-to-day activities are reflexively monitored by the agent as part of 'going on' in the variegated settings of our lives. Reflexive awareness in this sense is characteristic of all human action, and is the specific condition of that massively developed institutional reflexivity...as an intrinsic component of modernity. (Giddens, 1991, p. 35)



Giddens maintained “this critical reflexivity is a continual process and one that is encouraged by ‘fateful moments’” (Dawson, 2010, p. 193); therefore, acculturation can be interpreted as a significant event that brings about such reflexivity in migrants’ behaviour and practices. Thus, this self-reflexivity and awareness enable individuals to become active reflexive agents (Dawson, 2010). CCT scholars have explored the notion of reflexivity in studies of migration and global consumer culture regarding its representation in cultural discourses (Askegaard, Kjeldgaard & Arnould, 2009) and how such reflexivity is manifested in consumption practices (Emontspool & Kjeldgaard, 2012). Askegaard, Kjeldgaard and Arnould (2009, p. 115) defined cultural reflexivity as:

a simulation, where cultural tradition increasingly exists mainly as a reflexive and conscious practical realization of some idea of culture. Culture, then, could be said to increasingly take the shape of hype, a simulation of a possibly imaginary or purified version of that particular culture.

Emontspool and Kjeldgaard (2012) have studied ethnic identities and cultural reflexivity and demonstrated how it is manifested in consumers’ discourses. They argued that individuals “not only integrate in a particular ethnic community through consumption, but increasingly, also need to promote intercultural understanding by familiarizing their acquaintances from other cultures with their own culture” (p. 214-215). They highlighted “shifts between reflexive and routinized consumption practices as a basis for consumers’ cultural reflexivity” (Emontspool & Kjeldgaard, 2012, p. 214). Using Foucault’s theory of governmentality, Beckett and Nayak (2008) also discussed ‘reflexive consumer’ as consumers transforming from sovereign agents to active collaborators through their participation in the consumption process. Respondents in this mode of gender transculturation have also exemplified their reflexivity in their consumption practices.

Samir here explained that when he needed to buy clothes, he usually conducted extensive research, primarily online. He provided several examples here. When he bought a jacket for his time in Sweden, he examined a ski jacket and a down feather jacket and eventually went ahead with the ski jacket because of its usefulness against the rainy weather in Sweden. Even for overcoats, he considered between buying a formal one and an informal one and then researched the type of fabric and materials that the coat should have. He also stressed that this is not only for heavy involvement purchases such as jackets; he did the same for low involvement products such as t-shirts as well. Samir here demonstrated his reflexivity by exhibiting his market knowledge and his attempt to resist consumption by being sustainable. Mahfuz stated that his relationship with a European girlfriend pushed him to adopt Western values of sustainability, promoted by neo-liberal governmentality. Giesler and Veresiu (2014) argued that responsible consumption emerges from increased awareness about the social impact of consumers’ consumption decisions, which in

turn, is shaped by moralistic governance through neo-liberal consumer responsibilisation.

If I really need to buy something, I'll do a lot of research, like what is the best material here and why I should buy that, [and] not this. I remember doing a lot of research on a ski jacket versus down feather jackets, which one I should go for first. In the end, I went for a ski jacket since it's needed in Sweden, as it rains a lot and down feathers are not the best for rain. For let's say overcoats, in more formal environments you might need really good wool. And then you need to do a lot of research about which wool. Should it be Kashmiri? Should it be 100% wool or 70%? When buying something I really plan to use that for at least several years. And the same for t-shirts. (Samir)

After I got into a relationship it went down even more because my girlfriend is very much into sustainability and she tries to avoid buying clothes as much as possible and she has a grandmother who is really good at knitting clothes for her. She loves sending clothes that she made herself and she thinks it's a better way of wearing clothes because it has something personal with it. With that and you don't have to promote fast fashion. (Mahfuz)

Üstüner and Holt (2007, p. 51) argued that as home and host (Baticı) cultural ideologies of daughters, of poor migrant women from rural Turkey, conflict, they are “compelled to assemble themselves *reflexively* as Baticı women through the lens of consumer culture”. Eckhardt and Mahi (2012) also identified high degree of reflexivity in consumers engaging in everyday consumer resistance. In a related vein, Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) argued how consumers engage in reflexive strategies by relinquishing possession in favour of sustainable and antimarket consumption alternatives.

Participants demonstrated this antimarket sentiment by looking for sustainable and subversive—albeit market-based—alternatives. One such alternative for Samir was to consume through the second-hand market. Samir delved into second-hand online stores, such as Facebook Marketplace or Blocket, to consume home aesthetics. He exhibited pride in claiming that it was impossible to discern that they bought their couch from Facebook Marketplace, because it was in such a good condition. He also stated that he went to IKEA to find their dream table and then noted down the model number and came back to search for the same table in alternative marketplaces, demonstrating his reflexivity.

If I buy something from IKEA, you know chances are like everyone has one copy of that in their home. So, we have to be a bit creative here. We buy really good beddings and fabrics from Hemtex. But then sometimes we would also go for things available in Facebook Marketplace and try to see if we can find something good. For example, the sofa we bought, you wouldn't be able to tell that it's from Marketplace, but it is actually, we found a really good deal. And it's not only the sofa. I remember buying a small table for our microwave, because the space was really limited [in our kitchen].

We'll just go to IKEA maybe look at the model number sometimes and then try to see if that's available in Blocket or Facebook Marketplace. Me and my wife try to spend some time on acrylic painting. And we bought several boards with drill. All the paintings we have in our house are painted by us. We don't like to buy things, so we would just paint together and just put it on the wall. (Samir)

Samir highlighted that furniture from IKEA is very common in Sweden, as they are mass produced and available in most homes. To avoid such Western mass-commodified aesthetic, he found creative solutions by adorning his home with fabrics and bedding on the furniture to make it look different and unique, by decoupling their goods with conventional ideology (Üstüner & Holt, 2007) and appropriating them with new meanings and significations (de Certeau, 1984). He also posited that he and his wife decorated their home with paintings they created themselves, rather than buying from the market. In this instance, Samir is evading the mainstream market (Heath, Cluley & O'Malley, 2017) for paintings or other home aesthetics and opting to create DIY solutions.

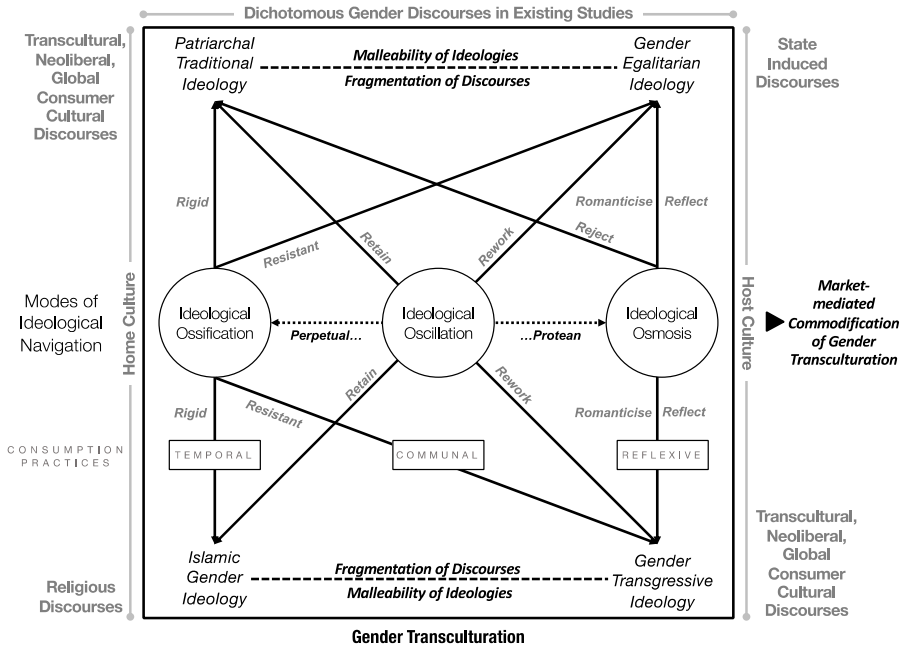
In this chapter, I presented how migrant respondents from Bangladesh engaged in ideological osmosis—by exhibiting a change in their gender socialisation due to their assimilation and adoption of host cultural norms and values—as they drew primarily from transgressive and egalitarian gender discourses by rejecting traditional patriarchal and romanticising as well as reflecting on egalitarian and transgressive gender discourses. Nevertheless, most participants in this mode of gender transculturation have experienced more freedom, as they embraced, adopted and internalised their host cultural norms and values. This marks the end of narrating the three thematic findings of this research. In the next chapter, I discuss the findings presented in this and the two preceding chapters and flesh out the contribution of this study.

# Gender Transculturation

In this research, I have attempted to understand how respondents navigate between different discursive gender positions, which are steeped in various higher-order gender ideologies. The three preceding chapters illustrated how migrant participants of this study—from Bangladesh living in Sweden—navigated across four contesting gender ideologies. I call this navigation of contesting gender ideologies that these migrant consumers underwent in their acculturation *gender transculturation*. Respondents have illustrated that in their complex navigation they draw from four ideal types of gender discourses: (1) traditional patriarchal, (2) Islamic, (3) egalitarian and (4) transgressive. These discourses emanate from a blend of their home and host cultures as well as the transcultural, neo-liberal and global consumer culture. It was also illustrated that their primary gender socialisation from their home culture—steeped in patriarchal and religious discourses—can be rigid, but they can also be open to change as they cross borders, exposed to gender-transgressive and egalitarian discourses. This is contingent on a wide gamut of norms, values and practices that stem from the state, religion, culture, history, experience, social interactions and relationship dynamics. The findings of this study demonstrated that participants navigate conflicting ideological tensions in three different modes of gender transculturation that I call ideological (1) ossification, (2) oscillation and (3) osmosis.

Drawing upon the analysis of respondents' narratives in the three preceding chapters, I developed a new model, which I call *gender transculturation model*, as shown in Figure 7.1. The model uses the analytical framework of this study from the theoretical departure (Figure 2.2) as a scaffolding and is constructed by superimposing various elements from the empirical findings and analysis from the three previous chapters. The analytical framework established previously designated four ideal types of gender ideologies placed on the four corners of the framework. As explicated earlier, gender ideologies within previous literature have been predominantly framed in a dichotomous form of traditional patriarchal and gender-egalitarian discourses, both within gender literature (Barrett, 1980; Coward, 1983; Lerner, 1986; Walby, 1990) and CCT (Chytкова, 2011; Molander, 2021; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). On the one hand, traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies were derived from home culture from Bangladesh, whereas egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies stemmed from the Swedish host culture. On the other hand, traditional patriarchal and transgressive gender ideologies were

influenced and perpetuated by transcultural, neo-liberal and global consumer cultural discourses. Whereas religious discourse moulds Islamic gender ideology, gender-egalitarian ideology has been induced and promoted by the Swedish state (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019) for a long period.



**Figure 7.1 Gender Transculturation Model**  
Migrant Consumers Navigating Contesting Gender Ideologies

In Figure 7.1, the three modes of gender transculturation—i.e., how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies—are shown in three circular shapes in the middle of the illustration. In ossification, respondents are rigid and resistant, whereas oscillation is embodied by retention and rework and osmosis is characterised by romanticisation, rejection and reflection. This is shown with arrows from the mode of navigation towards the four gender ideologies in the four corners of the figure. During their navigation, they also move back and forth between these three modes of gender transculturation, signposting that such navigation is perpetual and protean. It was also demonstrated that respondents usually engaged in a particular form of consumption practice—temporal, communal and reflexive, respectively—that coincided with each stage of their ideological navigation, as shown by rectangular boxes. In upcoming sections, I elaborate on the fragmentation

of discourses (shown by dotted lines) and market-mediated commodification of gender transculturation (shown on the right side of the figure).

Respondents engaged in *ideological ossification* as their ideologies remained rigid and resistant to change in the face of countervailing ideals in the host culture, upholding an ideological orientation towards their home culture by *rigidifying* traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies and being *resistant* towards egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. They experienced culture shocks, became miserable and maintained strong connections with their home culture using temporal consumption practices by travelling back in time and evoking nostalgia and reminiscing about their home culture by reciprocating and emulating home cultural consumption practices. In ossification, participants demonstrated tendencies to reproduce their home cultural gender structures in their practices within the host culture, as their views and beliefs on gender are deeply entrenched in their primary gender socialisation.

Some informants demonstrated that they strike a balance by blending various gender discourses through *ideological oscillation*. They began to internalise and adapt to their new environment by balancing their beliefs and views, often out of necessity and with a heavy heart due to normative pressures, to gain legitimacy and recognition of the mainstream community within the host culture. Nevertheless, they still maintained a strong connection to their home culture, appropriating cultural and consumption practices as well as micro-social ritualistic acts from their home culture within diasporic spaces of their host culture by engaging in collective consumption in communal spaces. These participants *retained* traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies while concurrently *reworking* their beliefs and views towards egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Some informants constantly moved back and forth between various gender discourses; instead of choosing both, they chose neither.

In *ideological osmosis*, participants have showcased that their views and beliefs are often more in line with their host cultural gender discourses and have been moving away from the home cultural orientations, with connections to their home waning. They appeared to embrace and fantasise about the lifestyle in their host culture, pursuing a certain imaginary lifestyle. They began to *romanticise* egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies, undergoing a significant change in their underlying ideological makeup, evident through their beliefs and views from their narratives. It was also demonstrated that respondents' beliefs were highly influenced by traces of progressiveness during their primary gender socialisation and upbringing. However, they *rejected* traditional patriarchal ideologies and also *reflected* on gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies to critique the pervasiveness of these patriarchal discourses even in their host culture. They engaged in reflexive consumption practices as they became more empowered and knowledgeable about the marketplace by attempting to manipulate or evade the market and become

concerned about moral and ethical issues in line with their host culture. This also enabled them to pose higher level reflective critiques.

Based on gender transculturation, three overarching key themes have emerged that expand our understanding of consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies. The rest of this chapter fleshes out the contributions of this research organised around three broad themes: (1) gender transculturation as ideological navigation, (2) fragmentation of discourses in gender transculturation and (3) market-mediated commodification of gender transculturation.

## Gender Transculturation as Ideological Navigation

The study of consumers using ideological contradictions and paradoxes in the marketplace is a central motif within CCT (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007, p. 138), which called for “more nuanced analyses...of the structural relations, dialectical tensions, and ideological disjunctures that exist among the different market systems (and corresponding consumer orientations) that are situated within the global circuits of corporate capitalism”. This study advanced such an understanding of ideological tensions and disjuncture in the marketplace. The list of studies that have used ideology in consumer research is long, and previous studies have engaged in discussions about how consumers use various discursive resources to craft their identities in acculturation (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) and the marketplace (Luedicke, Thompson & Giesler, 2010; Thompson, 2004; Thompson & Haytko, 1997). Specifically, studies on gender ideologies in the marketplace (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019) and gender identities in consumer acculturation (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) have primarily demonstrated that consumers draw from a dichotomous traditional patriarchal and a more contemporary egalitarian gender ideal. By adopting a transcultural perspective, this study demonstrated that respondents’ navigation of gender ideologies moves beyond this dichotomous nature and involves influences from religion, neo-liberalism and state-induced discourses. Such a shift in perspective helps us understand that ideological navigation is complex and nuanced and can be conducted in various ways as exemplified by the modes of gender transculturation.

In this section, consumer acculturation is demonstrated first as the navigation of ideological tensions by advancing three modes of gender transculturation. Second, consumer acculturation is posed as perpetual, protean and peripheral, not leading to outcomes in contrast with previous literature. Third, by adopting a transculturation lens, the study extends our understanding of transculturation within consumer acculturation literature. Finally, this section highlights the significance of moving

beyond understanding consumer identities, demonstrating the importance of conducting this study.

### **Navigating Ideological Tensions in Consumer Acculturation**

This study demonstrated how participants engaged in ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis to showcase various ways migrant consumers can navigate the contesting waters of ideological tensions in their acculturation into a new culture. This research took a theoretical departure from and contributes to the post-assimilationist models of consumer acculturation by Peñaloza (1994) and Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005). Peñaloza (1994) highlighted four outcomes of post-assimilationist consumer acculturation practices in terms of consumption choices: assimilation, maintenance, resistance and segregation. Migrant consumers assimilate consumption of offerings from their host culture. Furthermore, some maintain a connection to their home culture, some consumers resist ideologies of both cultures, whereas others segregate from the mainstream and consume within the spaces of their diaspora. The post-assimilationist model proposed by Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) maintains that consumers often idealise their home culture by creating a hyperculture of their native culture (Greenlandic hyperculture), some consumers occupy the position of an ‘Oscillating Pendulum’ experiencing alienation and attractions of their home and host cultures, some embrace their new host culture revelling on the expanded opportunities of the new marketplace (Danish Cookie), while others strike a balance by navigating between both cultures (Best-of-Both-Worlder).

However, unlike Peñaloza (1994) and Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), this study focused particularly on gender aspects of consumer acculturation. The various identity positions that Peñaloza (1994) and Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) have posed as acculturation outcomes might be, to a certain extent, paralleled with modes of gender transculturation in this study. For instance, Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard’s (2005) ‘hyper-culture’ and Peñaloza’s (1994) ‘resistance’ can be used to understand ideological ossification, Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard’s (2005) ‘oscillating pendulum’ and ‘the best-of-both worlder integration’ as well as Peñaloza’s (1994) ‘maintenance’ and ‘segregation’ can correspond with ideological oscillation, whereas Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard’s (2005) and Peñaloza’s (1994) ‘assimilation’ seemingly resemble ideological osmosis. While elements that form these studies could overlap to understand consumer acculturation, they are not homologous. The focal point of this study was to instead understand how these participants drew from four types of gender discourses to navigate ideological tensions. Thus, this study adds to the post-assimilationist consumer acculturation model by articulating various modes of gender transculturation that informants navigate through ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis.



Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman (2021) argued how ideological restructuring, in the face of ideological ossification, can help reproduce solidarity. While this research borrows the notion of 'ideological ossification' from existing CCT literature (Chatzidakis, Maclaran & Varman, 2021; Zwick, 2018), it adds to studies of ideologies by proposing other ways of ideological navigation, such as ideological oscillation and osmosis. Although scholars outside the domain (Drell, 2000; Hirschman, 2002; Lieber, 2013; Žižek, 2005) have employed the concept of 'ideological oscillation', within marketing and consumer research only the notion of 'oscillation' has been in use (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Molander, 2021; Schmitt, Brakus & Biraglia, 2022). The notions of 'osmosis' (Gibson & Papa, 2000) and 'ideological osmosis' (Li, 2012) have been scarcely mentioned even outside the domain. Thus, this study enriches the marketing and consumer research literature by conceptual borrowing.

### **Consumer Acculturation as Perpetual, Protean and Peripheral**

Previous post-assimilationist, post-modern and dominated consumer acculturation models within CCT (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) have focused on understanding migrant consumers' identity positions through consumption choices, which have been labelled as acculturation outcomes. This was shown in the synthesised post-assimilationist consumer acculturation model by Luedicke (2011) (Figure 2.1). However, although previous literature has labelled acculturation as a process, it has highlighted the identity positions that consumers inhabit as 'outcomes' (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), indicating a finality. The focus of this study was not on identity positions or outcomes, but on understanding how migrant consumers navigate conflicting ideologies, hence on a different aspect of consumer acculturation. Respondents in this study navigate across gender ideologies through ossification, oscillation and osmosis. Furthermore, within these various modes of navigation, participants have demonstrated that their acculturation experiences are never-ending and perpetual cultural transitions as migrants move back and forth between various modes of gender transculturation. Thus, it can be argued that consumer acculturation is perpetual, rather than leading to 'outcomes' (shown in Figure 7.1 with dotted arrows). This finding thus adds to Peñaloza (1994), Oswald (1999), Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytкова (2011). Therefore, this study demonstrated the importance of shifting our perspectives and understanding consumer acculturation as an ongoing process.

Moreover, this study also illustrated that respondents also move back and forth between the various modes of navigation. Akin to the fluid identity positions by Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), I also argue that these gender

transculturation modes are, to some extent, protean (also shown by dotted arrows in Figure 7.1). This research contributes to both these post-assimilationist models with substantial enrichment. While Peñaloza (1994) endorsed a fixed identity position by studying consumer practices, Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) propounded more fluid hybrid positions, but they both focused on—as the unit of analysis—migrant consumers’ constructions of identity positions and how such a diverse and fluid assortment of identity projects coalesce the home and host cultures through encounters in their new culture. Chytkova (2011, pp. 283-284) argued “the respondents’ gender identity presents itself as fluid and context-dependent”, as “the same woman can enact heterogeneous gender identities in different contextual situations, even in the course of seconds”, thus demonstrating “the fluid and changing nature of her gendered subjectivity”. In a similar vein, participants in this study navigate gender ideologies differently at different times—based on their interview narratives—demonstrating this fluidity in their navigation. Thus, the same participants can engage in ideological ossification and oscillation, depending on the context and their time of engagement.

Consumer acculturation theorists (e.g., Luedicke, 2011; 2015; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) have advanced scholarship on how immigrant consumers adapt to foreign cultures through consumption. Veresiu and Giesler (2018) stressed how immigrant consumers are steered towards the market. However, based on the empirical analysis in this study, it can be construed that all respondents, even those engaging in ideological osmosis, have not completely ‘assimilated’ into gender discourses promoted by the Swedish society and the marketplace. Although they interact with Swedes on a regular basis, they are still segregated (Peñaloza, 1994) into a tight-knit community of diaspora, regardless of their mode of ideological navigation. While they became a part of the marketplace for consumption, they have not completely acclimatised with the Swedish marketplace. Most are not acquainted with the Swedish media, such as reading newspapers or watching Swedish television programmes or advertisements, limiting their discursive interactions. Hence, they are not always exposed to gender-transgressive and egalitarian marketplace manifestations. Thus, their ideological osmosis can be interpreted as a form of *peripheral assimilation*, but far away from assimilation (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Peñaloza, 1994) or hyper-assimilation (Wallendorf & Reilly, 1983) presented within the consumer acculturation literature.

## A Transculturation Perspective

Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) indicated that one of the theoretical limitations of the study by Peñaloza (1994) was that it was contextually insensitive to transnational acculturation factors. They posed that institutional acculturation agents—discursive elements from the host culture of immigration, original home culture and transnational consumer culture—are negotiated as discursive resources.

In a similar vein, but differently, this study demonstrated the significance of understanding the transcultural, neo-liberal and global consumer cultural influences on gender discourses in consumer acculturation. The pervasiveness of traditional patriarchal discourse and gender-transgressive ideals have been propagated and commodified by the Western neo-liberal system. This study, thus, contributes to Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) by showcasing how these respondents use these gender discursive resources to navigate four contesting ideologies. It should be noted that studies on gender in consumer acculturation (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) have focused on the home–host cultural dichotomy. This study, therefore, also adds to the literature with a transcultural perspective.

By conceptualising gender transculturation and advancing a corresponding model, this study expanded the use of Ortiz's (1995 [1940]) notion of 'transculturation' in the field of marketing and consumer research. The concept of transculturation remains less used within the literature and according to the foreword to Ortiz's book by Coronil (1995 [1940]) can be readily adapted into other contexts. Thus, by adapting transculturation into the conceptualisation of gender transculturation as a form of immigrants' navigation of gender discourses, this study extends our understanding of transculturation (Ortiz, 1995 [1940]). Moreover, a transculturation perspective enriches the discipline of consumer research—and consumer culture theory—by adding a less essentialist perspective on consumer acculturation as well as demonstrating complex navigation across macro-social discourses and micro-level cultural norms that the concept of transculturation offers. The notion of transculturation also enables the transcendence of multiculturalism, as transculturation moves beyond the ideation of integration into a national identity that multiculturalism posits. Using transculturation, I argue the necessity of moving beyond acculturating immigrants (them) into the Swedish culture (us), and rather, perpetuating more variegated and distinct subcultures and creating new distinct cultural forms through neoculturation (Ortiz, 1995 [1940]) that immigrants and majority inhabitants can inhabit.

However, transculturation is not a utopian perspective where individuals tolerate each other's differences; instead, it promotes shared reflexivity that engenders "new solidarities and communities of interest that insist upon the importance of social, scientific and cultural productions that are particularly important in the context of the knowledge-based society in today's connected global cultures" (Imbert, 2014, p. 23). Nevertheless, the use of transculturation offers a complex transmutation of cultures that individuals experience in today's globalised world. Moreover, recent literature on transculturation has only provided a positive view, with scant attention paid towards a darker perspective (Marotta, 2014). This study advances such a critical perspective as gender transculturation perpetuates political polarisation, intensifies conflicts between cultures and widens the gap between immigrants and majority residents. This coincides with Ortiz's (1995 [1940]) notion that the process of transculturation is ambivalent and dangerous.

## **Moving Beyond Identities in a Polarising and Conflicting World**

As discussed above, this research has focused on consumer acculturation in terms of consumers' navigation of conflicting ideologies, and not on their own gender identities. While identity construction has been a predominant lens to study consumer acculturation within CCT literature (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), this study offers an alternative perspective in understanding consumer acculturation. Hence, the focus was on their iterative navigation of discursive resources, rather than on their identity outcomes. It is pivotal to move beyond forging identities using marketplace resources to gain an understanding of how these ideologies are played out in consumer acculturation. This study, therefore, contributes with a new way of categorising consumer acculturation processes—although I view these categories as more of scaffolding touchstones, a mosaic of orienting devices aimed to provide directions, rather than rigid structural canonisations—namely how consumers navigate conflicting gender ideologies. Increasing polarisation and clashes in today's world (Ulver, 2022) highlight the importance of this perspective.

Focusing on ideologies, instead of identities, provides a different outlook on understanding consumer acculturation. Previous consumer acculturation studies have provided us with an extensive understanding of creative identity outcomes through marketplace offerings. By adopting a different theoretical lens (Belk & Sobh, 2019) and focusing on ideologies, this study offers an alternative account of consumer acculturation, expanding our understanding of migrant consumers. A transculturation perspective on ideologies, thus, showed that discursive navigation is much more complex, multifaceted and pervasive. Through ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis, respondents navigate across four different forms of gender ideologies that are various combinations of home, host and transcultural discourses. Moreover, focusing on ideologies also provided an understanding of power relations and beliefs that transform power into domination. I argue that it is critical to look outside the identity work towards ideological navigation in the backdrop of today's world filled with tensions about polarisation and conflicts (Ulver, 2022; 2021), making this research, from a consumer cultural perspective, important. Such navigation of ideological tensions has implications as it can be used to look at other forms of ideological navigation or gender relations in diverse contexts.

## **Fragmentation of Discourses in Gender Transculturation**

Tissier-Desbordes and Visconti (2019, pp. 309-310) argued that “on a more systematic level, the weakening of gender discrimination could come through gender fragmentation” that “would help make gender less controllable, predictable,

and normative”. They indicated that fragmentation would lead to the proliferation of alternative meanings, “driving gender towards its attenuation and, even, disintegration” (Tissier-Desbordes & Visconti, 2019, p. 310). While these authors discussed the fragmentation of gender, in this section I highlight the fragmentation of gender discourses based on the findings of this study, which contributes to the literature on consumer acculturation, gender and ideologies.

In this section, first I illustrate that gender discourses move beyond the binary dichotomisation of patriarchal–egalitarian into more diverse and nuanced forms, influenced by religious and transcultural ideals. Second, I highlight that many respondents in this study demonstrated normative conformity by displaying tolerance and acceptance of host cultural ideals and values to blend in and avoid Othering. Thus, their adoption of gender-egalitarian and transgressive discourses could be viewed as superficial and not real change, fleshing out a gap between their beliefs and views with their adopted cultural practices and norms, implying a fragmentation from an authentic gender understanding of these respondents. Third, this section engages in theoretical conversation with two CCT studies in consumer acculturation on gender (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), where this research is positioned, discussing socio-cultural patterning structuring consumer acculturation. Finally, the section ends with showcasing that gender discourses are malleable—and hence can become fragmented—and respondents’ previous social gender order, degree of disenfranchisement and primary gender socialisation all inform and influence their views and beliefs as they navigate contesting gender discourses in their host culture.

## **Moving Beyond Dichotomous Gender Discourses**

As respondents navigated between the three modes of gender transculturation—ossification, oscillation and osmosis—they demonstrated different ways of negotiating their cultural practices and views about gender relations based on their beliefs and ideals about gender. During ideological ossification, respondents tend to reproduce the gender structures of their home culture—traditional patriarchal and Islamic gender ideologies—in their host culture through their views (in the marketplace) and (consumption) practices and resist egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Informants engaging in ideological oscillation have illustrated that they navigate by balancing and blending these four gender discourses. During the mode of ideological osmosis, participants expressed that they romanticised and reflected on a more gender-egalitarian and transgressive Swedish culture with fewer gender stereotypes and rejected traditional patriarchal ideology.

Although Peñaloza (1994) and Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) indicated tensions between cultures, their informants eventually adjudicated to any such conflicts, which Üstüner and Holt (2007) argued is not necessarily the case always. In this study, participants were not able to adjudicate their conflicts during

their discursive navigation. Highlighting the ideological compatibility between the dominant and minority cultures, Üstüner and Holt (2007) argued the need for understanding consumer acculturation enacted by fundamental ideological conflicts between the two cultures, particularly when one ideology is sanctioned more power in the dominant culture. This, Üstüner and Holt (2007, pp. 43-44) argued, is more important today as:

Recent debates on the fundamental ideological fault lines in the world today around religious, patriarchal, and capitalist ideologies, though often overly essentializing, do usefully point out that ideological conflict often runs much deeper than what is reported in consumer acculturation studies.

While Üstüner and Holt (2007) critiqued post-assimilationist consumer acculturation studies and asserted that the socio-cultural context conditions their findings, Chytкова (2011) argued that negotiation of female migrant consumers' gender roles is an inextricable part of consumer acculturation, even in a context that is different from Üstüner and Holt (2007). Scholarship on gender in consumer acculturation (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) have demonstrated that migrant women construct hybrid gender identity positions based on gender discourses from the home and host cultural contexts. Similar to Üstüner and Holt (2007), Chytкова (2011) also showcased rural migrant women coming from a patriarchal gender ideology into a context with gender discourses constructed by modern Western femininity, where the traditional image of women contests the liberal conception of individualism that defines the modern woman. Thus, the strategies of gender negotiation that Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytкова (2011) posited can, somewhat, be paralleled with this study, as these studies have made use of home and host cultural gender discourses that migrant consumers draw from in their identity construction.

In a similar yet different vein, this study showcased that respondents draw from various combinations of four different forms of gender discourses in their home, host and transcultural contexts. Thus, this study demonstrated that migrant respondents are influenced by gender discourses beyond the dichotomous orientation of patriarchal-egalitarian, as shown in previous studies outside (Barrett, 1980; Coward, 1983; Lerner, 1986; Walby, 1990) and within CCT (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007). While participants drew from patriarchal and Islamic gender discourses from their home, they also drew from egalitarian and transgressive gender discourses from their host, with patriarchal and transgressive discourses perpetuated by capitalist and neo-liberal systems of global consumer culture. Islamic gender ideology is mediated by religious ideology, whereas gender egalitarianism has been state-induced in Sweden at the time of this study. This research contributes to gender acculturation literature (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007) with an alternative understanding by illustrating that drawing from gender discourses is more complex and nuanced.

Additionally, this study also provided an understanding of the interaction of neo-liberalism, transcultural consumer culture and religion, showcasing how religious rhetoric is used (Izberk-Bilgin, 2015) in consumer acculturation in connection to gender. This inter-meshing of religion and gender through Islamic gender ideology engenders a new perspective not found in previous CCT studies. While the focus of this study is not on religion, this research contributes to religious ideologies in CCT (Hirschman, Ruvio & Touzani, 2011; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Sandıkcı & Ger, 2010) by exploring how informants have drawn from gender discourse informed by their Islamic ideology. Previous research has predominantly focused on consumers whose religious ideologies are more attuned to the dominant cultural setting (Hirschman, Ruvio & Touzani, 2011), for instance, exploring Christmas in the U.S., U.K., Sweden, Japan and other Christianity-dominant contexts (Miller & Löfgren, 1993; Tynan & McKechnie, 2005), Thanksgiving in the U.S. (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991) or Ramadan in Islamic contexts, such as Turkey (Sandıkcı & Omeraki, 2007) or Tunisia (Touzani & Hirschman, 2008). In this study, I explored respondents whose religious beliefs are not dominant within the Swedish cultural context. Global migration and the refugee crisis have resulted in individuals immigrating to cultures where their native religious ideologies do not hold (Hirschman, Ruvio & Touzani, 2011). This need for investigating non-dominant religious contexts has become crucial as there are large communities of the Muslim population living in Europe and North America today.

The research also, to a little extent, contributes to studies that employ religion to understand consumption practices (Appau, 2021; Appau, Ozanne & Klein, 2020; Rinallo & Alemany Oliver, 2019), by shedding light into migrant consumers' drawing from Islamic gender ideology. 'Religious testimony' (Ozanne & Appau, 2019) can offer new insights into consumer acculturation, particularly for a group within a diasporic—and a form of religious—community (Karataş & Sandıkcı, 2013). While Rauf and Prasad (2020) demonstrated subversion of fragmented socioeconomic structures by enacting a temporal egalitarian space of consumption, participants in this study have illustrated that consumer acculturation can also potentially create such subversions of marketplace structures.

## **Normative Conformity**

One of the predominant narratives found in this study was many respondents conforming to normative pressures in Sweden to accept and tolerate gender-egalitarian and transgressive values to be accepted and evade 'Othering' (Spivak, 1985). Thus, they disconnected their gender views and beliefs from their adopted gender-related cultural norms and practices. Accordingly, a 'gap' could be observed between their beliefs/views and practices/norms adopted, among many participants. This was demonstrated in several ways. These respondents have adopted host cultural norms, values and practices normalised in Sweden purely out of necessity,

convenience and survival in their new culture. Participants have often expressed that they did not think about gender when engaging in everyday (consumption) practices, and hence, there is a clear gap between their gender discourses and practices. It can be argued that their adoption of egalitarian and transgressive gender norms and practices cannot necessarily be viewed as an authentic change in their views and beliefs, and hence, leading to peripheral assimilation into gender norms and practices in their host culture.

Respondents, for instance, narrated how they participate in domestic work in Sweden, but concurrently also shared that they do not tend to replicate such gender-equal roles while visiting Bangladesh. Such duality was also expressed in other instances, where certain male participants' views towards gender and women in Sweden were more in line with the Swedish context, but on the contrary, those participants expressed their outlook about gender and women in Bangladesh or Bangladeshi women in Sweden in a very gendered way. Thus, their understanding of gender relations in their discursive practices—expressed through their narrations—towards Swedish women was very different, to the extent that it can be considered disconnected from their beliefs and ideals about gender. Some informants distanced themselves from any debates about gender beliefs and practices and decided to refrain from adopting a particular stance. Finally, some respondents attributed Swedish men—in the context of fatherhood (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019) and do-it-yourself work (Moisio, Arnould & Gentry, 2013)—as simply different, who cannot be held as normative, and thus, it did not influence their gender beliefs.

The gendered practices of these informants were not in line with their beliefs about gender, and hence, it was disjointed from their authentic gender understanding. An explanation for such a fragmentation could be attributed to their willingness to appear or conform to their host cultural society, but not truly embrace the values of the host culture. Some expressed that they consciously attempted to not stand out and be politically correct to go with the prevailing norms and practices in Sweden. Their acceptance of gendered practices in Sweden did not indicate espousing acceptance of gender egalitarianism or transgression, but enforced, involuntary routinised practices (Thompson & Üstüner, 2015) decoupled from their gender views and beliefs. Furthermore, such practices are enabled and constrained by their network. This fragmentation of gender views and beliefs from norms and practices of migrant consumers due to normative conformity is not found in previous studies of gender within consumer acculturation (Chytкова, 2011; Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), and thus, can potentially add to this theoretical conversation.



## **Socio-cultural Patterning Structuring Consumer Acculturation**

Peñaloza (1994) and Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005) studied consumer acculturation of immigrants from the West in the West, holding similar religious viewpoints. However, this study interrogated the acculturation experiences of consumers experiencing even more cultural and religious diversity. The post-modern consumer acculturation conditions that Üstüner and Holt (2007) postulated included that fundamental ideological conflicts and taken-for-granted anchors of migrants are challenged in a completely different dominant culture. In this research, such ideological conflicts are taken beyond the realms of what Üstüner and Holt (2007) posed—exploring Turkish women migrating from rural to urban areas—into the spheres of gender (migrating from a patriarchal to a more gender-equal country), religion (migrating from an Islamic to a secular one) and geography (from Global South to Global North or East to West). With this study, I add to Peñaloza (1994), Askegaard, Arnould and Kjeldgaard (2005), Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytкова (2011), with acculturation of migrant consumers from cultures that are more polarising and diverse in terms of the socio-political and culture-historic context.

This study predominantly contributes to the theoretical conversations on consumer acculturation and gender, specifically to Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytкова (2011), who explored post-assimilationist consumer acculturation from gender perspectives, similar to this research. Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytкова (2011) studied consumer acculturation in terms of gender to understand the construction of hybrid (gender) identities that women forge migrating into a context with more equal gender ideology. Unlike these studies, this research explored the acculturation experiences of men and women, focusing on gender ideologies rather than on women's identities (Donato et al., 2006), offering amplified contextual richness. Üstüner and Holt (2007) focused more on contextual socio-cultural patterning, whereas, Chytкова (2011) used food to study gender. The present research offers an alternative to these two influential works on gender and acculturation by taking a transculturation perspective and specifically studying gender ideologies through marketplace resources. Furthermore, because consumer culture theorists study “in consumption contexts to generate new constructs and theoretical insights and to extend existing theoretical formulations” (Arnould & Thompson, 2005, p. 869), this contextual novelty can uncover newer theoretical insights.

Üstüner and Holt (2007) advanced the dominated or post-modern consumer acculturation model indicating conflicts between home and host culture's gender ideologies during crafting of identities. They critiqued generic acculturation agents and hybrid identity projects in previous consumer acculturation studies (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Peñaloza, 1994) that disregarded the socio-cultural and contextual factors structuring and impeding acculturation, which leads to the various patterns of consumer acculturation. According to Üstüner and Holt (2007), socio-cultural structures that shape the acculturation context are delineated by

sufficient capital or social class, ideological compatibility of minority and dominant cultures and post-modern consumer culture. In this study, it was illustrated that respondents have often adopted host cultural egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies and corresponding norms and practices to conform to normative pressures of demonstrating tolerance and acceptance of their host cultural elements. Thus, while I concur with Üstüner and Holt (2007) that socio-cultural patterning is contextual, it is not necessarily always contingent on socio-cultural structures.

While Üstüner and Holt (2007) focused specifically on migrant consumers with low capital and post-modern consumer culture, this study instead demonstrated that such conditions are not always essential to reproduce similar patterning of consumer acculturation. Respondents in this study, while being diverse in many ways, were also homogenous in terms of a high level of education and socio-economic position in Sweden. This study, therefore, tells us something about this group of migrants that are becoming globally more important with increasingly stricter migration policies in immigrant-receiving cultures, such as Sweden. Therefore, this study demonstrated that such patterning could also be possible with a different level of capital and ideological compatibility.

Furthermore, Üstüner and Holt (2007) argued that the creation of hybrid identity positions through consumption choices in previous post-assimilationist models was possible because the majority and minority cultures were not in conflict—and the minority culture was commodified and legitimised by the dominant culture using minority culture as a symbolic resource—and migrants had sufficient capital. Contrarily, Chytкова (2011) argued that the conditions presented by Üstüner and Holt (2007) were not necessary for dominated immigrants to use marketplace resources in constructing their hybrid identities. Chytкова (2011) indicated that socio-cultural patterns structuring the conditions of her studies were not similar to previous post-assimilationist models of acculturation, such as lack of legitimisation of the minority culture, the differences in (gender) discourses and privation of capital.

While I did not investigate migrants with low capital resources—as Üstüner and Holt (2007) and Chytкова (2011)—the context of this study maintained the other post-modern consumer acculturation structuring conditions. First, the ideological difference between Sweden and Bangladesh is quite vast in terms of gender, religion, socio-political and culture-historical contexts. Second, Muslim consumers can be considered more recognised in Sweden as a separate group, specifically after the wave of immigration during the refugee crisis and the rise of the Muslim population in Sweden. However, it could be argued that Bangladeshi consumers specifically did not have such recognition in the Swedish consumer culture, and hence, were not as ‘legitimised’ as indicated by Üstüner and Holt (2007). Therefore, this study concurs with Chytкова (2011) in reinforcing that post-modern consumer acculturation does not necessarily require the fulfilment of certain socio-cultural contexts, thus contradicting Üstüner and Holt (2007).

## Malleability of Gender Ideologies

Many participants—engaging in ideological oscillation and osmosis—in this study have indicated that their beliefs and views about gender have gone through varying degrees of changes during their acculturation. Gender transculturation involves diverse negotiation of gender beliefs and practices among immigrant consumers. Marketplace resources provide these respondents with ammunition to engage in such negotiation. This study, therefore, denotes the *malleability* of gender ideologies. In studying consumer movement solidarity rejuvenation, Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman (2021) discussed how ideologies go through changes. Similarly, Molander (2021) also stated that despite being deeply entrenched, conventional gender structures can still undergo changes. According to Chatzidakis, Maclaran and Varman (2021, p. 14) ‘ideological reconfiguration’ can ‘regenerate solidarity’, which “is less ideologically ossified, allowing for greater movement inclusivity” and “these changes were not automatic and required concrete shifts to enable the structures and everyday practices”. In a similar vein, this study demonstrated that deeply entrenched (gender) ideologies can potentially undergo change due to consumer acculturation. However, such malleability was not always the case.

CCT researchers (Ostberg, 2012; Klasson & Ulver, 2015) have also demonstrated that feminised consumption practices in Sweden are being increasingly masculinised as men are reconfiguring traditional feminine work into masculine. This study demonstrated that marketplace communication and resources influence respondents’ views and beliefs about gender in Sweden and their consumption activities. Participants from a less gender-equal context have been able to familiarise themselves with more gender-equal and contemporary masculine practices in Sweden, as marketplace resources have allowed them to venture into such feminised domains. Conversely, Avery (2012) highlighted that when women venture into masculine spaces, men react in a different way, as women’s gender-bending consumption to men threatens to destabilise the norm, by sparking countervailing responses. In this study, it was found that respondents who occupied subordinate positions in the social gender order (Connell, 2005) in their home country were more sensitive towards adopting and acclimatising to their host culture’s egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Thus, their receptivity to recognising, accepting and internalising gender-egalitarian and transgressive messages is contingent upon their position in the social order of gender in their home country. This study also adds to Thompson and Holt (2004) by providing an alternative perspective of ‘gender tourism’ that some men can occasionally visit their traditional masculine domain as a ‘reinvigorating retreat’ to revitalise their masculinity knowing that they will return to their more egalitarian spaces in their host culture.

As discussed in the previous sub-section, Üstüner and Holt (2007) argued about the importance of taking into account the socio-cultural conditions patterning consumer

acculturation. Based on the findings of this study, it can be interpreted that respondents' views about gender norms and relations have been socio-culturally constructed by their upbringing. Throughout the interviews, participants demonstrated that they inherited views and beliefs that stem from their home culture based on their family background, education, socio-economic status, local community, peer group and experiences of growing up. Their acceptance of gender-transgressive and egalitarian ideologies also stems from primary gender socialisation. A recurring theme was that respondents who generally encountered more disenfranchisement in their home culture were more aware of gender-egalitarian and transgressive discourses. They were better able to verbalise and relate to gender-transgressive and egalitarian discourses when prompted with such imageries. Hence, their level of knowledge and acceptance of gender-transgressive and egalitarian ideals potentially depend on their reciprocal degree of being marginalised and discriminated against back in their home country, translating to their power and position in society.

Specifically, respondents with traces of gender progressiveness in their upbringing and socialisation were more open to orienting their cultural practices in line with the host culture's ideologies. Thus, I exemplified that informants' cultural background and context heavily influence their acculturation experience. Üstüner and Holt (2007, p. 50) argued that the daughters of migrant women "routinely used knowledge of brands they associated with the *Batıcı* lifestyle, which they had learned primarily through advertising, to perform their inclusion". Similarly, respondents in this study demonstrated that marketplace resources, such as certain advertisements, have influenced their gender views and beliefs. Furthermore, some also demonstrated that they have reworked their normative gender ideals based on personal interactions with individuals who transgress gender norms, such as alternative gender identities. Overall, findings from this study also indicated that irrespective of their views and beliefs, participants were more aware and informed about transgressive and egalitarian discourses on gender, and many have revealed that this was a consequence of their acculturation in Sweden. To sum up, respondents with subordinate positions in the gender hierarchy, marginalisation and progressiveness in their upbringing from the home culture were found to have more malleable gender ideologies. These insights were not found in previous consumer acculturation studies (Chytкова, 2011; Üstüner & Holt, 2007), and thus, add to theoretical conversations.

## Market-mediated Commodification of Gender Transculturation

Studying how migrant consumers use marketplace resources in their acculturation in terms of gender, this research showed that the marketplace commodifies gender transgression and ethnic consumer subjects in different ways. By responding to various marketplace images and discussing their consumption and marketplace experiences, participants demonstrated that the marketplace co-opts gender transgression by marketing gender-egalitarian and transgressive ideologies as commodities. In a related vein, Veresiu and Giesler (2018) argued that ethnic consumer subjectivities can be also commodified through market-mediated multiculturalism, a neo-liberal way of making ethnicity a marketable commodity and making immigrants into ethnic consumer subjects. Similar to neo-liberal multiculturalism as conceptualised by Veresiu and Giesler (2018), neo-liberal governmentality (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014) can also be used to understand commodification of gender-transgressive movements in the marketplace. Most respondents—at various modes of ossification, oscillation and osmosis—critiqued the neo-liberal and capitalist marketplace-mediated gender transgression and multiculturalism. Thompson and Coskuner-Balli (2007) discussed that consumers were disgruntled by the co-optation of the organic food market by the capitalist marketplace, resulting in ideological counter-moves with consumer-supported agricultural (CSA) initiatives. In this study, I also showcased how acculturating informants used various strategies as ideological counter-moves as they critique marketplace commodification of gender transgression and immigrants.

In this section, first, I delve into discussions of market-mediated commodification of immigrants in Sweden and demonstrate how such commodification converges with and diverges from the account of Veresiu and Giesler's (2018) study on market-mediated multiculturalism. The findings showcased that the marketplace commodified immigrant consumers by fetishising them as 'Others', but not to the same extent as described within the CCT literature. Instead, such commodification was only peripheral. Second, the commodification of gender transgression was also illustrated as a cultural appropriation and neo-liberal proliferation of capitalist ideals to recolonise the colonised. However, despite such commodification, gender might not appear to be as transgressive in the market. Such commodification also diminished women's bodies and challenging gender equality. Most respondents were more accepting towards gender egalitarianism but less towards transgressive ideologies. Third, I highlight the degree of equality and emancipation that participants of this study have enjoyed with marketplace resources mediating their acculturation. Although respondents enjoyed more equality and freedom from certain parochial structures and norms, gender still remained unequal, albeit lesser than in their home culture, demonstrating their disenfranchisement in the host culture. Finally, the section ends by highlighting three forms of consumption

practices—temporal, communal and reflexive—discerned in these three modes of navigating contesting gender ideologies, which are complex, multifaceted and pervasive.

### **Market-mediated Commodification of Migrants**

Participants have indicated that the marketplace commodified immigrant consumers by fetishising them as ‘Others’ (Bhabha, 1983; Spivak, 1985). Veresiu and Giesler (2018) argued that owing to the power imbalances among consumers from immigrant-receiving and immigrant-sending cultures, the multicultural marketplace in the immigrant-receiving culture engages in market-mediated multiculturalisation. This is defined as an institutional instrument to reduce ethnic group conflicts through which the immigrant-receiving cultures fetishise the immigrants to reduce power imbalances. According to Veresiu and Giesler (2018), mediated by neo-liberal governmentality, migrant consumers are socialised through envisioning the ethnic consumer by putting multiculturalism on the national agenda in the political sphere, followed by the market research domain exemplifying those consumers, retailers equipping the multicultural marketplace with ethnic offerings, and finally, consumers embodying those proposed ethnic identity positions.

Nevertheless, it can be interpreted that, based on the four strategies by Veresiu and Giesler (2018) in establishing market-mediated multiculturalisation, immigrant consumers in the context of this study were also envisioned in the political sphere. However, unlike Veresiu and Giesler (2018), informants in this study argued the opposite, namely that the marketplace was not equipped adequately to transform such representation into the consumption sphere. They indicated that the market in Sweden did not provide sufficient resources for their ethnicity to be commodified. The only exceptions were found in specific retail spheres, concentrated in certain immigrant residing areas, catering to a specific diasporic community segregated from the mainstream. Thus, such market-mediated multi-culturalisation is not found in this study—based on the narratives from the respondents—in the same way as in Veresiu and Giesler (2018). However, this does not necessarily reflect the commodification of other ethnicities in Sweden. Nevertheless, this illustrates that market-mediated multiculturalisation is highly contextual, and despite Sweden becoming more multicultural, with waves of immigration, the marketplace has not commodified immigrants in the same way. The study, therefore, contributes to this theoretical conversation. Veresiu and Giesler (2018) indicated that Canada is considered the most multicultural country in the world, and unlike Sweden, there has been a deliberate drive to forge a multicultural society based on the intake of immigrants (Jupp, 1997). Based on this study, it can be argued despite Sweden and Canada being multicultural, their market-mediated multiculturalisation was done differently; in Canada through the marketplace, and in Sweden through the state.

Respondents in this study indicated that immigrants are fetishised in the form of *tokenism*, as the marketplace communication and media representations included more diversity and inclusion by osmosing immigrants in those communications, but they were reduced to a mere ‘token’ role, which is not real inclusivity. Popularised by Kanter (1977a, 1977b), researchers in sociology and gender studies have discussed tokenism (Turco, 2010; Yoder, 1991; Zimmer, 2014; Wright & Taylor, 1998). It is defined as members of a marginalised subgroup being accepted and included in positions earmarked for a member of the dominant group, while the rest of the disenfranchised group is deprived of access and, hence, remains excluded and disadvantaged (Yoder, 1991; Wright & Taylor, 1998). Hence, such inclusion is only for appearance, but does not lead to any actual social change. Bristol, Lee and Hunt (1995) exemplified tokenism by showing that the representation of African Americans on screen is assigned a ‘token’ role compared to the protagonist because in most cases, they were cast as minor roles but not the central characters, unless it is necessary to the narrative. It can be interpreted that participants in this study critiqued such hypocritic marketplace representations.

### **Market-mediated Commodification of Gender Transgression**

Almost all respondents, during their various modes of gender transculturation, critiqued gender-transgressive manifestations in the marketplace. Hence, it can be interpreted that the commodification of gender transgression is a Western construction, governed by neo-liberal ideologies (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014) through the capitalist marketplace. Representations of gender transgression have been viewed as marketplace mediated, animated by profit-mongering Western brands, which only magnifies the Western understanding of gender and reduces the colonised cultural contextual understanding of gender. Informants highlighted that these brands merely attempted to create shocks with risqué appeals to become more noticeable among the consumers. Respondents questioned the profit-seeking agenda of Western brands and their intent to really inflict social change. Discussing the imagining of the Swedish football striker Zlatan Ibrahimovic’s ‘hyperSwedish’ wife and blonde children as “ethno-nationalist fantasies of White dominance” and of “Swedish hegemonic Whiteness”, Ulver (2021, p. 401) demonstrated the commodification of inclusivity in Sweden as a multicultural difference to be consumed. This is because only the differences that can be adopted into the culture through consumption practices are relevant (Ahmed, 2011). Using the same line of thoughts in this study, I argue that the commodification of gender transgression is merely a cultural appropriation and neo-liberal proliferation of Western capitalistic ideologies to recolonise the colonised in a post-colonial era, and it, hence, negates nuances of gender relations in non-Western cultural contexts.

Coined by Kwame Nkrumah, Ghana’s first president, neo-colonisation represents the continued dominance of the previously colonising Western cultures still playing

an influential role in the governing of previously colonised countries, which is “more insidious and more difficult to detect and resist than the direct control exercised by classic colonialism” (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2013, p. 178). Participants indicated that the commodification of gender transgression is a new way of colonisation, as Western ideologies are propagated. One argument put forth was that gender-neutral clothing is only gender-neutral in a Western context, whereas such clothing can appear as highly gendered in other cultural contexts. This means that the commodification of gender transgression by the marketplace is simply a tool proliferated by neo-liberalism from the West, which does not consider gender transgression in other socio-cultural contexts, and hence, does little to promote gender neutrality. Rather, it is only the commodification of Western values and norms. An abundance of studies in CCT, within the stream of consumer resistance literature, have highlighted a diverse assortment of practices as Western capitalistic agenda (Arsel & Thompson, 2011; Izberk-Bilgin, 2012; Kozinets, 2002; Kozinets & Handelman, 2004; Sandıkcı & Ger, 2010; Thompson & Arsel, 2004). This study adds to that conversation by arguing that brands further that neo-liberal agenda through the commodification of gender transgression and ethnicity through neo-colonialism (Parameswaran, 2002; Sherry, 2008), which enables them to diminish non-Western cultures.

There was disenchantment of gendered expectations and behaviour among certain participants. They demonstrated that gendered practices in Sweden are not as transgressive as they appear in the marketplace, but commodified through neo-liberal governmentality (Giesler & Veresiu, 2014) and indicating spectacularisation. It was also found that co-optation, commodification and proliferation of gender transgression can lead to spectacularisation by hyperbolising and providing misleading representations of the disenfranchised. Some respondents argued that although the marketplace communication exhibited gender-equal and transgressive ideologies, consumption in Sweden was still gendered. They cited examples such as gendered retail spaces and gendered products in the market. They further added that in everyday life gender is still very unequal in Sweden, as there are fewer women in leadership positions and women take more time than men to maintain their appeal and appearances. Men sporting women’s clothing are less visible than women donning men’s clothing, dubbed as gender-neutral. Even in marketplace communication, they indicated that, while products are marketed as gender-neutral, there were still elements of gender stereotyping, such as product colouring.

Moreover, informants argued that the commodification of gender transgression often diminishes women’s bodies by showcasing girls as flat-chested or with short hair, often not equated with gender norms. Participants also indicated that commodification of gender transgression still eluded regular ‘normal’ bodies. The argument was that brands still segregated the normalised female clothing from ‘curvy’ and ‘plus-size’ ones by promoting ‘XXL’ stores, in effect, promoting the commodification of ‘zero-size’ and ‘unrealistic’ bodies. Scaraboto and Fischer



(2013) discussed a similar practice of segmenting consumers into ‘petite’, ‘missy/junior’ and ‘plus-size’ based on their bodies. Furthermore, although they argued that consumers’ identity work can change marketplace structures, this study showed that such segregation only widens the gap between these consumer segments. Brands today commodify everything and ‘even support grass-roots social movements to structure their political actions’ (Bertilsson, Lucarelli & Fuschillo, 2022, p. 103). Nevertheless, it can be argued that commodification of gender-transgressive ideologies in the marketplace leads to further polarisation of consumers—widening the chasm between the liberals and conservatives (Ulver, 2022) as well as between the immigrants and the majority residents (Ulver & Laurell, 2020)—in effect, aggravating conflicts.

Similarly, respondents argued that such commodification of the agender movement (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018) has led to a reduction of gender equality. Scott (2005) noted that mainstream feminism can often conflict with gender and sexual transgression, although she noted that focusing on beauty and appearance does not negate feminism. Some participants underlined that the commodification of gender transgression and inclusion also negated normative and stereotypical gender representations. They indicated that conventional extremes on the gender continuum are necessary to uphold a diverse gender representation, whereas the current commodification of gender transgression made it politically incorrect for one to identify as very masculine or highly feminine. They questioned the construct of inclusivity as the commodification of gender transgression did not include conventional extremes anymore. This can be interpreted as simulated and peripheral inclusion (Rennstam & Sullivan, 2016; 2018) that excludes certain groups. Additionally, while more respondents were accepting towards the Swedish gender-egalitarian ideology, they were less amenable towards gender transgression in terms of tolerating gender beyond the binary. It can be construed that respondents were more open to espousing gender-egalitarian ideologies because they were more aware of it than gender transgression, even before the border crossing. Furthermore, it can also be argued that their religious indoctrination was somewhat less incongruous with gender-transgressive ideologies than with egalitarianism.

## **Equality and Emancipation**

Most migrants that cross borders from the Global South to the Global North acculturate from a less gender-equal society to a more equal one. Most respondents expressed that they found higher degrees of equality and emancipation in their new more gender-egalitarian and transgressive host culture. Informants expressed that they felt emancipated from parochial gender structures in Bangladesh to live in Sweden with more freedom in terms of lack of social pressures, a more open and respectful society, more gender equality, more autonomy in clothing, less judgemental and hierarchical culture, more safety and security, less religious

constraints, and so on. However, some indicated that they found certain constraints in their host culture, which could be interpreted as due to religious differences or patriarchal dividends. Connell (2005, p. 79) argued that while not many men might be ‘rigorously practising’ and enforcing “the hegemonic pattern in its entirety”, most still “benefit from the patriarchal dividend, the advantage men in general gain from the overall subordination of women”. Many of those who draw from the patriarchal dividend “also respect their wives and mothers, are never violent towards women, do their accustomed share of the housework, bring home the family wage” (Connell, 2005, pp. 79-80). Nevertheless, almost all participants agreed that women enjoyed more freedom than men, because of power imbalances in their home culture.

Furthermore, almost all respondents agreed that their gender roles in Sweden were comparatively more equal than their roles back in their home country. Informants discussed that men are more involved in domestic work as well as in other feminised spaces such as child rearing. Scholars in CCT (Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019) have demonstrated that state-induced Swedish gender-equal ideology influences fatherhood in Sweden, and in effect, produces a contemporary model of masculinity, which is commodified in the marketplace. They discussed ideological navigation in terms of conflicting gender ideologies in Sweden between a more contemporary one and a traditional one. In this study, I also demonstrated that respondents’ navigation of gender ideologies is also influenced by religious and transcultural, global and neo-liberal discourses.

However, such acculturation is not necessarily a process of achieving gender equality and emancipation. While respondents who were in a subordinate position in their home culture have gained more equality and emancipation in their host culture, their gender transculturation experiences have nevertheless continued to be indisputably structured by gender inequality. Several participants illustrated that gender is more equal compared to Bangladesh, but still very unequal compared to how it is for Swedish women, akin to Chytkova (2011). Many informants signposted that gender roles and practices in Bangladesh are reproduced in their everyday life and consumption. Some respondents also demonstrated the pervasiveness of gender inequality within diasporic spaces; such structures are maintained by those migrants with more power in the diaspora. Respondents also argued that they felt like outsiders in Sweden. Their acculturation is often a story of migration from a less gender-equal to a comparatively more gender-equal culture, where gender inequality is less predominant but still pervasive. They merely become racialised Others in their new host culture (Ahmed, 2000). Thus, equality and emancipation have improved but remain evasive for these respondents.

Hearn and Hein (2015) highlighted the significance of ideologies in diverse cultures that reproduces gendered power in societal structures. They underlined that gender power is relational, context-dependent, is mediated through postcolonialism, racialisation and transculturation. Thus, gender transculturation can have a

significant impact on ameliorating this normative gendered power balance among marginalised individuals, even in contemporary Western cultures.

## **Consumption Practices**

This research showcased different consumption practices that respondents employed during various modes of their navigation: temporal, communal and reflexive consumptive practices. Participants engaging in ideological ossification employed temporal consumption practices to evoke nostalgia for their home culture. Some respondents participating in oscillation in their ideological navigation used communal consumption in diasporic spaces to employ ritual consumption and decommodification practices (Belk, Wallendorf & Sherry Jr., 1989; Cronin, McCarthy & Collins, 2014; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). Informants at the osmosis mode of navigation engaged in reflexive consumption practices as they became more reflexive in terms of understanding the host cultural discourses and the marketplace. Thus, respondents' consumption practices were specific to these distinct modes of gender transculturation. This identification of corresponding consumption practices in each mode of navigation adds to the literature on consumption and consumer acculturation.

Additionally, while previous post-assimilationist acculturation studies have typically depicted consumers as agentic identity makers creatively crafting with marketplace resources (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994), this study provides a more conflicting viewpoint, demonstrating that immigrant consumers are less agentic than how they are presented within the literature. Respondents in this research, particularly during ideological oscillation, displayed that their consumption did not change considerably due to their acculturation, whereas any change in consumption was usually because they were forced to change to acclimatise and adapt due to normative conformity, without any influences on their set of beliefs and views about gender. This comes out of a more fragmented and algorithmically polarised media landscape (Ulver, 2022). However, it would be imprudent to conclude on consumer agency because, in contrast to previous post-assimilationist studies, this research did not explore consumer identities.

The final chapter of this book is a brief discussion of practical implications. This is followed by certain limitations of this research and how future research can pick these findings and expand our understanding.

# Conclusion

With increasing polarisation and conflicts based on ideological trenches and a more fragmented and algorithmically polarised media landscape (Ulver, 2022; 2021) in a transcultural world, understanding how immigrant consumers navigate contesting gender ideologies is an important perspective. In this research, I studied gender transculturation by understanding how migrant consumers navigate contesting gender discourses, which are steeped in higher-order ideologies, to make sense of their acculturation experience using marketplace resources and communication. I investigated cultural practices, beliefs and views about gender relations in the marketplace by interviewing Bangladeshi respondents in Sweden to understand how they navigate between four ideal types of traditional patriarchal, Islamic, egalitarian and transgressive gender ideologies. Participants in this study demonstrated their navigation of contesting ideological tensions through three modes of gender transculturation: ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis.

In the penultimate chapter, I illustrated how the study has expanded our understanding of consumer acculturation (Askegaard, Arnould & Kjeldgaard, 2005; Chytкова, 2011; Jafari & Goulding, 2008; Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004; Luedicke, 2011; Oswald, 1999; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner & Holt, 2007; Veresiu & Giesler, 2018) and gender (Avery, 2012; Bettany et al., 2010; Molander, 2021; Dobscha & Ostberg, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019; Stevens & Ostberg, 2011; Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018), among others, within the domain of consumer culture theory. This chapter concludes this monograph by presenting the practical implications of the study. The subsequent section discusses the limitations of this study that can be addressed with future research. This final chapter closes with some concluding thoughts.

## Practical Implications

At the time of this research, Sweden has long been influenced by state-induced gender equality, emanating from the Swedish ‘feminist’ government’s gender mainstreaming and feminist policies (Government Offices of Sweden, 2021a; 2019; Molander, 2021; Molander, Kleppe & Östberg, 2019; Molander, Östberg & Kleppe, 2019; Swedish Institute, 2019; 2021). However, the new right-wing government after the September 2022 general elections has ‘ditched’ the long-standing label of

feminist foreign policy—although they did stress that they would always stand for gender equality as a core value within their policies—and that perhaps indicates a forthcoming shift in government policies on gender in Sweden (Juhlin, 2022; Lund, 2022; Thomas, 2022; Thurfjell, 2022). Nevertheless, in elaborating on various implications, I adopt a perspective presuming that the Swedish state as well as the marketplace would continue to advocate for a gender-equal society and that gender transgression would be promoted through transcultural and global consumer cultural discourses. In this section, I first discuss the practical implications of this study in relation to gender and the marketplace for consumers and market actors, followed by societal implications.

### **Implications for Consumers**

Navigation of contesting ideologies can help provide immigrants with a better understanding of how to manage conflicts related to gender when they cross transcultural borders. Recognising the various modes of gender transculturation can furnish migrant consumers with information about traversing their consumption practices in the marketplace based on their ossification, oscillation and osmosis. An improved understanding of temporal, communal and reflexive consumption practices can also provide them with more knowledge to help them manage their consumption. It could also be helpful for them to view their acculturation as a perpetual process that is in flux. Moreover, it might be beneficial for them to also recognise various gender ideologies that are traditional patriarchal, Islamic, egalitarian and transgressive, which emanate from not only their home and host cultures, but are also influenced by religion, state and transcultural, neo-liberal and global consumer culture.

The study can also inform migrant consumers that their acculturation into the host culture can often lead to normative conformity, signposting an involuntary adoption of their host cultural practices, without particularly espousing the beliefs and ideals about gender in terms of their host culture. Such a fragmentation between their beliefs/views and adoption of norms/practices needs to be addressed for their acculturation. Moreover, relevant for migrant consumers is to recognise that their views and beliefs on gender are contingent on their primary gender socialisation in their home culture including the progressive one in their upbringing, position in the social gender order and degree of disenfranchisement. Moreover, their gender ideals can also undergo changes during their acculturation, as ideologies are malleable.

This study can also provide useful knowledge for the majority residents to help immigrants in their acculturation, at various modes of gender transculturation, in their culture. This is particularly important because participants in this study experienced alienation as outsiders and normative pressures to conform without necessarily internalising the ideals. The majority residents can, on the one hand, fetishise and exoticise the commodification of immigrants by consuming ethnic

differences (Veresiu & Giesler, 2018), whereas on the other hand, they can also reduce the essentialisation of cultures by adopting a more transcultural perspective and assimilating such differences as a part of a hybrid consumer culture, resulting from neoculturation.

## **Implications for Market Actors**

Previous research has called for market actors to espouse a more gender-egalitarian and transgressive portrayal in the marketplace (Bettany et al., 2010; Gentry & Harrison, 2010). Identifying the various modes of ideological navigation of migrant consumers can inform market actors to enact and adopt consumer socialisation strategies. Veresiu and Giesler (2018) identified how the ethnic consumer subject is institutionally inflected through envisioning in politics, exemplifying through market research, equipping in the marketplace and embodying through consumption. This research can expand our understanding of consumer socialisation strategies by enabling market actors to structure such strategies based on the modes of gender transculturation of migrant consumers. It could also be beneficial to know more about various consumption practices that migrant consumers engage in during various modes of gender transculturation, to better fit their needs. The findings that consumers' previous gender socialisation influences their acculturation process can be used by market actors to design better socialisation strategies.

It can be interpreted from respondents' narratives that they view market actors as using neo-liberal governmentality to commodify and co-opt gender-transgressive political movements through marketplace resources, upending the power balance in society. Such market-mediated tokenistic practices only create more conflict and cynicism among consumers and "an enlightened disbelief in: the market, the other consumer and the self" (Bertilsson, 2015, p. 447). Thus, market actors could attempt to create more authentic representations and offerings. Another perspective that this study advances is that inclusivity is characterised by neo-liberal inclusion of only the progressive ideologies, overlooking the stereotypical conventional extremes. Some participants insinuated that certain gender-transgressive communication has diminished women's bodies and widened gender disparities. Thus, marketplace actors can attempt to understand and overcome such peripheral inclusion by potentially expanding these immigrants' understanding of gender-transgressive issues.

Market actors can also be cognisant that, in certain modes of gender transculturation, migrant consumers are forced to acclimatise to their host culture due to normative conformity pressures, without necessarily adhering to their beliefs and views about gender in the host culture. Thus, they can cater to these consumers without necessarily resorting to inauthentic brand activism (Vredenburg et al., 2020) and unnecessary fetishisation and exoticisation of the strangeness of 'the Other' (Ahmed, 2000). Some respondents critiqued that while marketplace representations

are very transgressive, corresponding physical manifestations, such as retail spaces and products, are still highly gendered. Hence, market actors could be mindful of this to ensure consistency and uniformity in their communication and offerings. It was also found in this study that market actors in Sweden ignore certain groups of immigrants (Chytkova, 2011) as they rarely commodify Islamic or Bangladeshi goods in the Swedish market. Such manifestations were only found in certain diasporic and migrant-concentrated areas. Such imbalances could be addressed to assuage gender-related conflicts and facilitate consumer acculturation.

## **Societal Implications**

This research provides important implications for transcultural societies by illuminating how immigrants can be integrated into a transcultural context, which is increasingly important in today's world brimming with political polarisation and conflicts. Assuming that Sweden continues to promote gender equality, this section provides suggestions pertaining to how public policy in relation to the marketplace and gender roles could be influenced by this study. This research emphasised the increasing importance of understanding various gender discourses to redress the impact of normative gender hegemony (Bettany et al., 2010; Gentry & Harrison, 2010). It could also help us understand at a societal level that gender ideologies are not necessarily dichotomous but are multifaceted and potentially malleable. They are profoundly influenced by various other discourses, including religious, neo-liberal and transcultural. Moreover, understanding ideological influences and how they are at odds with each other is difficult but pivotal. Hence, findings from this study provide an alternative understanding of gender within consumer acculturation that can potentially help elevate our understanding of migrant consumers, particularly those from diverse socio-economic, culture-historic and politico-religious backgrounds.

By looking at how immigrants navigate contesting gender ideologies, policy-makers could potentially construct more inclusive policies to attenuate conflicts at various modes of gender transculturation (ideological ossification, oscillation and osmosis). An ideological perspective could illuminate a more nuanced understanding of power relations in transcultural society between immigrants and majority residents in general and the dominated and vulnerable immigrants owing to gender (in)equalities in particular. The study provided an important perspective by advancing the notion that immigrants can often be imposed to acculturate into a new culture without necessarily adhering to the culture's beliefs and practices. It can be argued that such a disconnect of gender views and beliefs from cultural norms and practices about gender relations can be detrimental, leading to conflicts and problems in their acculturation. This illustrates how deeper ideological conflicts run (Molander, 2021), which is challenging for the acculturation of immigrants (Üstüner & Holt, 2007). Policy-makers could look for constructive solutions to address such a

disjuncture or ‘breakdown’ (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; 2011)<sup>36</sup> between our socio-cultural expectations and actual experiences.

While the Swedish state has promoted gender equality through their policies for a long time and comprises a highly multi-ethnic population, certain findings from this study could help policy-makers to facilitate migrant consumer acculturation. A recent indication of a preventive migration policy has only seemed pernicious to some respondents of this study. Moreover, based on the findings of this study, it can also be argued that the notion of transculturation advocates the creation of hybrid and new distinct cultural forms that immigrants and majority residents can embody, which Ortiz (1995 [1940]) termed neoculturation. This could help policy-makers to ruminate beyond the assimilation of immigrants into the Swedish culture. However, this could also be resisted by the majority residents in Sweden who might defend their loss of Swedish identity, which is potentially more relevant due to a rise in nationalism and right-wing movements (Ulver & Laurell, 2020). Hence, it is important to be sensitive towards the majority residents to attenuate gender-related conflicts in the marketplace.

The study also illustrated that participants’ previous gender socialisation, position in the social gender order, and marginalisation in their home culture inform their acculturation. These findings have important implications that could potentially help institutional actors propose more specific acculturation policies. For instance, policy-makers could look for immigrants’ mode of gender transculturation in understanding their acculturation. Furthermore, while respondents in this study enjoyed emancipation in their new host culture, they have also concurrently experienced being outsiders, once again highlighting the importance of the whole transcultural society to transform the culture—rather than attempting to integrate immigrants—to promote a more hybrid culture. This study could help shed light on the emancipation and gender equality of immigrants, and accordingly, it has important societal implications. Finally, the findings from ideological navigations of immigrants can also be used in other contexts to understand other ideological tensions in a world full of conflicts and polarisation or in other gender contexts.

## Limitations

Several limitations can be identified in terms of the conduct and analysis of this research. One major limitation of this study is that, despite my attempts to avoid an ‘Othering’ and essentialising perspective, it can be argued that, nonetheless,

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<sup>36</sup> Alvesson and Kärreman (2007; 2011) described that a breakdown can occur when our theoretically informed expectations from cultural and academic knowledge conflict with our actual experiences. Here, I mean a breakdown in a similar, but in a different way as a fragmentation.



essentialisation and Othering could be observed in this study. For starters, positing immigrants' drawing of discursive resources from the home and host cultures—or reducing them to the Global North and the Global South—is also a way to essentialise cultures. However, by incorporating a more transculturation perspective of acculturation, I attempted to minimise such essentialisation of the respondents because the concept of transculturation “helps to avoid naturalizing, fetishizing, or essentializing diversity as an object or a concept” (Lehmkuhl, Lüsebrink & McFalls, 2015, p. 10). For instance, I used four ideal types of gender ideologies that emanate not only from the home and host cultures, but are also induced by state, religion and transcultural, neo-liberal and global consumer cultures.

Second, in this research, I studied cultural views and beliefs about gender relations that participants expressed in their narratives. One could expostulate that such interpretations did not adequately capture informants' navigation of gender ideologies. However, I acknowledged throughout the study that my interpretations of respondents' views and beliefs were based on how they narrated their perspectives and experiences during the interviews and could diverge from their actual views and beliefs. However, it could also be contrarily contended that in a social constructionist study, capturing informants' views and beliefs is always subjective and interpreted by the researcher. Nevertheless, an ethnographic observation could have provided a more nuanced understanding. Additionally, it can also be postulated that ideological navigation is a macro phenomenon, which should not be juxtaposed with understanding participants' navigation by looking at their more micro-practices and values. However, it can also be argued that transculturation is complex and driven by macro-social discourses, but resolved at the micro-social individual level (Lehmkuhl, Lüsebrink & McFalls, 2015; Welsch, 1999). Hence, a counter-argument could be posited that the use of transculturation helped resolve the problem of understanding ideological navigation by interpreting informants' micro-practices and views.

Finally, the scope of this study was limited because it only investigated Bangladeshi immigrants. More comprehensive and nuanced perspectives could perhaps be identified by changing the lens or widening the scope of this study. One way could have been to adopt a different theoretical perspective—such as a post-colonial lens—or to investigate migrant consumers from more or other cultures more in line with the representation of immigrants in Sweden. However, based on the ontological orientation espoused in this study, it could be contended that interpretive consumer studies are always highly contextual.

## Future Research

The findings from this research have implications for future research. First, in this study, although I investigated Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh with an ideological contrast in terms of religious views, religion was not a focal point. A natural progression of this work would be to provide more attention to these religious ideologies and understand how religion intersects with gender in consumer acculturation, especially with an upsurge of Islamism worldwide and a conservative backlash against such a rise (Islam & Islam, 2018). Another perspective cast aside from this research by narrowing down the scope of the study was the amputation of a consumer resistance perspective. Although this study demonstrated certain elements of consumer resistance, further studies are needed to understand how migrant consumers resist host cultural ideologies in the marketplace through their (everyday) consumption practices.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore the perspectives of the majority residents who form a significant part of the marketplace and ethnic group conflicts. Luedicke (2011) and Visconti et al. (2014) called for more research that accommodates migrants' and majority residents' perspectives because both have important implications in terms of consumption and personal/collective well-being. Few studies in consumer acculturation have explored such perspectives (Luedicke, 2015; Kipnis, Broderick & Demangeot, 2014), and very limited research encapsulated migrant and non-migrant perspectives (Visconti et al., 2014). I call consumer culture theorists to take into account the micro-social phenomenological lived consumers' experiences and concurrently interrogate macro-social historical and institutional forces to generate a more comprehensive understanding of gender ideologies in consumer acculturation.

Ortiz (1995 [1940]) argued that transculturation can be viewed as emplacement, displacement and amalgamation through acculturation, deculturation and neoculturation. Hence, understanding how the Swedish culture has gone through such changes due to transculturation of immigrants can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of (gender) transculturation. Moreover, this research opened up new avenues for researchers to explore in-depth the phenomenon of gender-transgressive ideologies and how such ideologies are co-opted and commodified in the marketplace in the form of gender-transgressive communication. Hence, future research could illuminate an understanding of gender transgression that has gained traction recently (Visconti, Maclaran & Bettany, 2018) and enrich our knowledge about the commodification of such countercultural movements (Thompson & Coskuner-Balli, 2007). Further explorations are also necessary to flesh out the impact of neo-liberal governmentality in proliferating Western capitalist gender ideologies and post-colonial perspectives to understand how it redraws post-colonial boundaries separating the Global North and the Global South.

Moreover, the findings of this study could shed light on consumer acculturation in the context of other theoretically important but unexplored contexts such as sexuality (Coffin et al., 2022). Future studies could explore how ethnic consumer subjects are queered within LGBTQ+ contexts. Furthermore, in this study, I focused exclusively on first-generation immigrants. I urge consumer researchers to investigate gender transculturation in the context of second-generation immigrants (Lindridge, Hogg & Shah, 2004) to develop a more comprehensive framework. It is important to understand later-generation immigrants because such a perspective can add to the existing modes of gender transculturation. Additionally, as ideological navigation is contextual, it is difficult to understand participants' mode of engagement in real life simply based on their interview narratives. Further research is required to systematically analyse the boundaries that condition and structure these modes of gender transculturation. These modes of navigation are complex as they encounter ideological shifts in their acculturation, as well as overlapping. Today's world is filled with ideological tensions and conflicts, making it more challenging for immigrants to negotiate such tensions. It would also be interesting to study the linkages between these ideological conflicts in consumers' identity work, which most consumer acculturation research has studied.

Moisander, Peñaloza and Valtonen (2008) expressed how the use of 'individual' as the primary unit of analysis and the overuse of phenomenological accounts in CCT need to be buttressed. This sentiment was echoed in Thompson, Arnould and Giesler (2013, p. 151), who argued that CCT is "reproducing the hyperindividualising, overly agentic, and ahistoric, sociologically impoverished theoretical orientation [...], posing paradigmatic barriers to systematic investigations into the sociocultural shaping of consumption and the ideological production of consumer subject positions". This was reinforced by Askegaard and Linnet (2011) who called for works that integrate micro-social phenomenological consumers' accounts with the macro socio-historical framework, based on theoretical insights of the researcher, which structure and influence the market and consumption system. This call to understand the culturally contextualised consumer subject by interrogating the context of context was reiterated by Karababa and Ger (2011, p. 738), who indicated that "more research is needed on the conceptualisation 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". In a homologous vein, Giesler and Veresiu (2014) reverberated the same by emboldening future researchers to understand how cultural value systems and institutions mediate consumer identity projects in market systems. This research attempted to answer such calls by looking at gender ideologies in the marketplace through discourses. However, a more macro focus to understand how market actors institutionalise and produce the gender-transgressive subject, by observing how such ideologies play out in the Swedish marketplace, would be interesting. Connecting consumer experiences to marketplace ideology and socio-political and culture-historical structures (Sredl, 2018) could be an interesting approach.

## Concluding Thoughts

With every ending, there is a new beginning. With the emergence of far-right and nationalist ideologies influencing identities and citizenship, a backlash against migration and gender has become more prevalent, resulting in global conflicts. On the one hand, liberal democracies hold a belief in freedom of religion and speech, but simultaneously, this heralds necessary respect and acceptance of illiberal and unequal ideologies, not least to make up for the West's colonial history. However, should the West not begin to see its own vulnerability and get back some kind of confidence to fight stronger for one's rights, even in a somewhat more normative way? Or is that completely dissonant with democracy? That is the dilemma.

I hope this study has enriched the discussion of consumer acculturation and gender ideologies by demonstrating how respondents draw from various gender discourses and navigate contesting tensions when they cross borders. While the study went through various degrees of change throughout the last five years, it feels like it ended up being exactly what it was supposed to be. I have felt privileged to work on issues that I am passionate about and are close to my heart. If this research helps a single individual to enhance their understanding of gender ideologies in their acculturation and improves their life, I would consider it a success.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Major Feminist Perspectives

**Table 2.1 Major Feminism Perspectives**

Adapted from Alvesson and Billing (2009), Bristor and Fischer (1993) and Visconti, Maclaran and Bettany (2018)

Concept	Definition
Liberal Feminism	Stemming from liberal political philosophy, the liberal feminist perspective can be associated with anti-discrimination campaigns of the second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s that primarily aimed to provide women with equal rights and opportunities as men and eliminate sex-related differences, mainly through legislation.
Radical Feminism	Radical feminism spurns the male-dominated society altogether and avows to emancipate women from patriarchal relations, reorder the social codification radically, or even construct their own social institutions. Their idea is based on the notion that women's experiences, interests and orientations are drastically different from those of men or their patriarchal society.
Marxist Feminism/ Socialist Feminism	Marxist and socialist feminism uses a critical lens to understand society to contribute to a radical change where new gender relations are incorporated as central tenets.
Post-structuralist/ Post-modern Feminism	Inspired by the postmodernism and deconstructionism movements and the works of authors such as Derrida and Foucault who brought discourse and language as the focal point mediating everything. They question the hegemony and socially dominant discourses that methodically subjugate women and other marginalised groups in society and strive to create 'heightened openness' that equally values diverse perspectives.
Post-colonial Feminism	Post-colonial feminists seek to accentuate the significance of alternative forms of oppression, such as race, class and ethnicity, and explore their relationships with the gender oppression of marginalised women.
Ecofeminism	Ecofeminism focuses on the connections between women/body and nature. It challenges binary ways of thinking that devalue the feminine, which manifests in the belief that mankind has dominion over nature. They propose an ecocentric framework that views humans and nature as intimately connected and interdependent.
Queer Theory	Stemming from post-structuralist theories and influenced by works of Butler and others, queer theory challenges the normative structures in society, including heteronormativity and binary gender associations.

# Appendix B: Expressions of Ideologies in Discourse

**Table 3.1 Expressions of ideologies in discourse**

Adapted from van Dijk (2006)

- 
- **Context:** Speaker speaks as a member of a social group; and/or addresses recipient as group member; ideologically biased context models: subj. representations of communicative event and its participants as members of categories or groups.
- 

- **Text, discourse, conversation:**

Overall strategy: positive presentation/action of Us, negative presentation/action of Them

- Emphasise Our good things, and Their bad things, and

De-emphasise Our bad things, and Their good things

**MEANING**

- **Topics** (semantic macrostructures)
  - Select/Change positive/negative topics about Us/Them.
- **Local meanings** and coherence
  - Positive/Negative Meanings for Us/Them are
    - Manifestation: Explicit versus Implicit
    - Precision: Precise versus Vague
    - Granularity: Detailed/fine versus Broad, rough
    - Level: General versus Specific, detailed
    - Modality: We/They Must/Should...
    - Evidentiality: We have the truth versus They are misguided
    - Local coherence: based on biased models
    - Disclaimers (denying Our bad things): 'We are not racists, but...'
- **Lexicon:** Select Positive/Negative terms for Us/Them (e.g. 'terrorist' versus 'freedom fighter')

**FORM**

- **Syntax:** (De)emphasize Positive/Negative Agency of Us/Them
  - Cleft versus non-cleft sentences ('It is X who...')
  - Active versus Passives ('USA invades Iraq' versus 'Iraq invaded by USA')
  - Full clauses/propositions versus nominalisations ('The invasion of Iraq').
- **Sound structures:** Intonation, etc., (de)emphasising Our/Their Good/Bad things
- **Format (schema, superstructure: overall form)**

Positive/Negative meanings for Us/Them in

- First, dominant categories (e.g. Headlines, Titles, Summaries, Conclusions) versus last, non-dominant categories.
  - Argumentation structures, topoi (stereotypical arguments, e.g. 'For their own good')
    - Fallacies that falsely conclude Our/Their Good/Bad things, e.g. overgeneralizations, authority, etc.

- **Rhetorical structures**

Emphasising or de-emphasising Our/Their Good/Bad things by

- Forms: Repetition
- Meanings: Comparisons, metaphors, metonymies, irony; euphemisms, hyperboles, number games, etc.

**ACTION**

- Speech acts, communicative acts, and interaction
    - Speech acts that presuppose Our/Their Good/Bad things: promises, accusations, etc.
    - Interaction strategies that imply Our/Their Good/Bad things: Cooperation, agreement
-

# Appendix C: Interview Guidelines

**Table 3.2 Interview Guidelines**

Final Version (changed over time)

<b>Introduction and Consent</b>
Is it okay to record this interview?
Administration of verbal and/or written consent.
<b>Background and Context</b>
Please tell me about yourself, your background and your family?
Could you please describe your education and work?
Could you please describe your home? Are you married? Do you have children?
Where do you live? How did you end up in Sweden?
When and why did you decide to move to Sweden?
Could you please describe your life? (Socio-economic situation and aesthetics around)
Could you please describe your childhood and upbringing? How and where did you grow up?
Could you please describe how differently men and women are treated in your life?
Could you describe a typical day for you?
<b>Consumption and Lifestyle</b>
How do you spend your leisure time?
What do you usually read? Are you connected with Swedish media?
What movies and television programs do you watch? Have you ever watched Swedish TV or Swedish commercials?
What music do you listen to?
And what about arts, sports, or any other hobbies do you spend your time or money on?
Let us now talk about consumption categories frequently associated with your lifestyle. Here, I am trying to understand your tastes and actions across a variety of genres and specific consumption objects in each category.
Let us start with food: How does your consumption vary across different situations (e.g. for eating breakfast/lunch/dinner/snacks, home/takeout/restaurants, alone/family/guests, and weekdays/weekends/special occasions) and over time (e.g. how eating patterns changed with any big changes in life, like when you got married or such as the addition of children or when you moved to Sweden).
How does your consumption of clothing varies across different situations and over time?
How about the same for home décor and furnishings?
Apart from all the things that we talked about until now, like food, clothing, furniture and everything else, what else do you spend your money on?
What are you looking forward to buying or consuming in the future?
<i>Use emic terms by informants to probe and elicit specific stories, recounting, stereotypes and longings that together ground the subjective meanings of these terms.</i>
<b>Acculturation: From Bangladesh to Sweden</b>
As a Bangladeshi living in Sweden, what changes do you see in culture and lifestyle here? I am interested to know how often are you confused in this culture? Any shocks? Anything that made you curious?
How do you live your life here? Do you know/hang out with any Swedes for example? What about at work? Who do you usually hang out with?
What do you think about the Swedish weather/clothes/fashion/shops?
How do you use Swedish stores? Are you surprised while you shop? Is there anything strange that stands out?

What about people? Do you see any differences between gender roles? What do you think about how they dress, move, seem to eat?

If and when are you surprised about how women and men relate to each other here compared to in Bangladesh?

---

**Prompts: Gender-transgressive Advertisements**

---

I will show you some pictures, tell me what you think about the advertisements?

What do you see, how does that make you feel, what comes to mind, what do you find interesting or weird, have you thought this way?

Have you seen this type of ads in your country?

Could you compare and contrast the ads you have seen?

How your values align with the values you think the ad represents?

If you place yourself in the ad as the ad agency, what would you do more or differently?

Which one would fit you if you were the model? Why?

What do you think about their position in society, their attitude?

---

**Gender**

---

To you, what does it mean to be a man...or a woman...?

What would constitute a real man, can you give me examples of what is a real man?

From my experiences of living here in Sweden, I noticed that there are more degrees of freedom, as nowadays we can see around us many more ways of being a man or woman, and we can see that in watching people, in advertising, in the market. What do you make of it or think about this?

Do you feel that you have different degrees of freedom here?

So, let me ask you about gender and sexuality in general, some people define themselves as non-binary/neutral/fluid (out of the binary male/female). What does this mean to you?

What do you think about hijras? Difference in how people think about and treat them?

For decades Swedish politics has been infused with the ethos of gender equality and progressive politics, what traces of this can you see in people's everyday lives and in your life?

Gender is more present or less present in the Swedish culture, where do you position yourself within that? I mean, how do you encounter the division of men and women here?

---

**Gender Consumption, Marketplace and Advertisements**

---

*Pick out things in the surrounding, such as I went to H&M yesterday and noticed this...have you seen this billboard...leading them by picking up on current events.*

*Come up with a brief scenario that I could have them read of a situation that I can make up, where things come up to get them into the right mode.*

*Leverage my common background with them and play with that. For instance, sometimes when I am here generally, I really like being in a situation where there is more flexibility in terms of what I can and cannot do, for example, I saw this man wearing this...it just felt so unmanly!*

Can you remember seeing an advertisement that made you want to change your appearance, behaviour or change the way you look at things?

Does any ad come to your mind that changed the way you are or expanded your horizons or thoughts in terms of gender?

Do you remember seeing an ad that you felt was inappropriate or not something you would do, where you felt that this is something that you hoped that, for example, your child or parents should not see, which is embarrassing?

Do you remember seeing anything in shops or stores, maybe the store design or something, that caught your eye or you felt was weird or different (*prompts/taboo differences between people regarding gender differences*)?

When you buy or consume something, in what situation or context do you experience gender is present?

Have you thought about a time when gender became obvious to you when you were shopping?

How do you think men and women consume differently and what do you find as appropriate/inappropriate? (*Try to get a sense of comparison between Bangladesh and Sweden*)

Regarding gender, what do you notice/think about people in stores, in the street, at work, (*to understand more about gender ideology differences*) that you come across in your everyday life?

There are many expressions and behaviours that are acceptable here, but may be not back in Bangladesh. What things would brands do in Sweden that, back in Bangladesh, would not be okay to do?

What are your views on how brands market themselves using gender?

The Swedish state is said to be promoting a feminist and gender-equal ideology. What do you think this means for the market?

How do you think gender (ideologies) manifests/presents itself in the marketplace (in advertisements) to you? Can you give me an example of how the marketplace adopts gender-transgressive ideologies?

---

### **Probing**

*Repeat things from their examples.*

*Reveal a bit more in detail about gender-related things they say or the social situation they talk about*

Could you tell me more about it...

Do you remember an occasion when that happened?

Could you tell me about your thoughts and feelings when you...

How, if all, have your thoughts and feelings changed since...

That's interesting, can you tell me more about it/would you tell me how you define it so that I have it in your words?

Tell me stories about...

---

### **Miscellaneous**

Would you tell me how you would describe the person you are now? What most contributed to this change/continuity?

As you look back on...are there any events that stand out in your mind? Could you describe each one/it? How did this event affect what happened?

---

### **Closure**

Brands are still using gender. What do you think about that?

How do you see...in the future?

Is there something you would like to ask me?

Thank you so much for your participation.

---

## Appendix D: Informed Consent

### Verbal Consent

#### Excerpt from Interview Verbal Consent

*After the interview, it would be transcribed from the recording, without any identifying details so that the transcription cannot be connected to you in any way. The transcribed interview would be coded and analysed and only I and my PhD supervisors would have access to this data. Everything that you say would be pseudonymised and anonymised, meaning that your real name or other identifying details would not be used or appear in any form in the publication of the research. The study results could publish excerpts from this interview, but it would be presented in such a way that no individual interview participant could be identified. You can find the results of this study, once it is published, at the Lund University website, but you can also let me know if you wish me to send you a digital or printed copy once my research is complete. Your answers and information would be handled confidentially and processed in such a way that unauthorised people could not access them. Also, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions or feel it's too personal, you can choose to not answer and tell me to shut up. You are also free to withdraw your participation from the study at any time if you prefer to do so without any explanations or consequences. Your participation in this study would not expose you to any potential harm, but rather you can potentially help contribute to scientific knowledge by helping us understand more about migration and gender in the marketplace. First, I would like for you to tell me if you understand everything I have said and let me know if you need any further clarification. And now for the record, I would need you to give me your consent by saying 'yes'.*

---

## Written Consent (Vade Mecum)



### SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

Hej!

My name is Hossain Shahriar, and I am a doctoral candidate at Lund University School of Economics and Management. I am conducting this study on gender, migration, consumption and the marketplace as a part of my PhD programme. I would like to invite you to take part in this research project. You are being asked to participate in this study because of the interest you have expressed in it. The objective of this document is threefold: to provide you with details about the project, explain what participation in the project would mean for you and ask for your informed consent once you have agreed to participate.

#### **About this study**

The primary objective of this research is to understand how migrant consumers understand and view gender ideologies in the marketplace. You have migrated from a culture with an understanding of gender structures, norms, beliefs and practices different than those communicated here in your current society. I want to understand your migration experience, consumption and your views and beliefs about gender. I want to know about various dimensions that influence your gender-related thoughts, perspectives and consumption.

#### **How will the study be conducted?**

The study uses interviews with consumers as the method of data collection to understand gender ideologies, migration, consumption and the marketplace. I am conducting individual interviews with Bangladeshi individuals living in Sweden. Your participation involves engaging in a conversation about these topics and articulating your thoughts and views on certain print and multimedia advertisements

that would be shown to you as prompts. The interview could take potentially two and a half to three hours.

### **What will happen to your personal details?**

After the interview, it would be transcribed from the recording, without any identifying details so it would be difficult to possibly connect the transcription to you in general. The transcribed interview would be coded and analysed and only authorised individuals would have access to this data. Everything that you say would be pseudonymised, meaning that your real name or other identifying details would not be used or appear in any form in the publication of the research. Your answers and information would be handled confidentially and processed in such a way that unauthorised people could not access them. The study results could publish excerpts from this interview but it would be presented in such a way that no individual interview participant could be identified. The information collected would be used for this project and kept in a secure location for 10 years, after which it would be destroyed.

### **Your information, your choice**

Your participation is voluntary, so you are also free to withdraw your participation from the study at any time if you prefer to do so without any explanations or consequences. Moreover, if you feel uncomfortable answering any questions or feel it's too personal, you can choose to not answer.

### **Potential risks and benefits**

Your participation in this study would not expose you to any potential harm, risks or burdens, but rather you can potentially help contribute to scientific knowledge by helping us understand more about gender in the marketplace.

### **Results of the study**

The results of this research would be published in a manuscript and/or academic articles in scientific publications. You can find the results of this study, once it is published, at the Lund University website, but you can also let me know if you wish me to send you a digital or printed copy once my research is complete.

### **Informed consent**

By signing this document, you are providing consent:



- (1) to allow me to record this interview,
- (2) acknowledging that you understand this research project and everything else outlined in this document and ask for any further clarifications necessary to understand everything before providing your signature and
- (3) to participate in the research project as explained, enabling me to collect and process your data, as outlined in this document, that includes everything you say during the interview.

---

Your Signature

---

Date

**Who to contact?**

I, Hossain Shahriar, am responsible for this research, and you can contact me via e-mail at [hossain.shahriar@fek.lu.se](mailto:hossain.shahriar@fek.lu.se).

**Figure 3.1 Data Analysis using NVivo**  
Screenshot of early data analysis phase





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