Title: How Are Retro Markets Made? Nostalgic-Emotional Consumption and Retrofication (under review at the Journal of Consumer Research)

Abstract: Consumer researchers have characterized retro markets as nostalgic-emotional systems that provide consumers with a sense of community and authenticity in an unsafe world. We demonstrate that the creation of such systems requires socioeconomic inequities to be actively inscribed into nostalgic products and brands, a multi-step and multi-actor process of mythic transfiguration, which prior scholarship on popular memory enables us to theorize as retrofication. After that, we analyze nostalgia for East German products and brands to illustrate the role of retrofication in cultivating four prominent German post-reunification retro markets: the “heroes of labor” market, the “connoisseurs of leisure” market, the “pioneers of youth” market, and the “champions of health” market. Our findings shed novel light on the transformation of historical memories into nostalgic-emotional market systems and inform previous scholarship on retro branding, popular memory, and cultural branding.