

Edited by
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Handbook of Research on Identity Theory in Marketing



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DEDICATION

We dedicate this volume of extraordinary chapters to Professor Geraldine Rosa Henderson. Gerri, as you now soar with the angels in what will be your next chapter, we celebrate you and your life and the immeasurable impact that you have had on so many lives.

Rest well, dear friend.

Introduction: the long and winding road to understanding identity theory and marketing

Americus Reed II and Mark Forehand

In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity. (Erikson, 1968, p. 130)

The above quotation illustrates the importance of identity. It is hard to imagine any behavior a person could engage in that would somehow not have implications for how they see themselves and how the world sees them. Indeed, the question of “Who am I?” is one that we as human organisms ponder. We surmise, re-evaluate and update our self-conceptions throughout our lifespan. The cognitive sophistication and complex ability to articulate self-reflective thoughts separates humans from other species; the ability to define who we are and what we want to become. Therefore, “identity is important” is probably not a controversial statement. That is the easy part. What is more difficult is to pinpoint the best way to define and study it. After all, if something defies definition and measurement, then it is nothing more than lofty philosophical rhetoric, a useful metaphor, perhaps (Cohen 1989). If the idea of “identity” is a serious area of empirical inquiry, then one must face the difficult challenge of developing a precise theoretical, methodological and substantive set of ideas to capture this construct. In that regard, there has been great progress, yet there is much more work to do.

From the early days of personality research (Allport 1937; Murray 1938; Barenbaum and Winter 2008), the idea of a monolithic self was appealing. A person has a “self-concept”: the sum total of thoughts, ideas and beliefs about who they are, and what they want to be. If you could identify what the key elements were, then you might be able to predict what that person is going to say, think and do. It made sense to focus on static and enduring traits that may be an important set of building blocks to base this conception on (Cristal and Tupes 1992; Costa and McCrae 1997; Costa et al. 1998). The fact that measuring these traits often produced weak relationships to other outcomes pointed to the need for additional nuance within the conception of what a self-concept actually means (see Griffith and Jenkins 2004). It was the information processing revolution, the self as an organizing structure in memory (Kihlstrom and Klein 1986), and the idea that the self-concept is better thought of as categories or a collection of

“social identities” (Tajfel and Turner 1979; Abrams and Hogg 1990) that opened a door forward to deeper understanding. This need for complexity comes at a price, though. Now the questions are: What are the key social categories that matter? When do they matter? Why do they matter? How do they change over time?

Psychologists care about these questions; however, so do marketers. Brands are more than just logos and taglines. They are meaning systems. Products, services, organizations, behaviors or even people can be brands. That means that they are also markers of identity (Forehand et al. 2002; Reed 2004). Therefore, the coupling of identity and marketing is a natural marriage. In fact, in marketing, there is a parallel path of the evolution of the self and identity as it emerged in psychology. Classic work recognized “symbols for sale” (Levy 1959) and how marketing stimuli might be self-expressive extensions of consumers (Belk 1988; Cohen 1989) that can trigger positive responses (Forehand et al. 2002; Lenoir et al. 2013). Marketers, brand managers and public policy advocates understand that deeper connections exist if a product, service, organization, behavior or person becomes a part of a consumer’s identity. Therefore, the same vexing questions that psychologists ask about identity (the what, where, when and how) are also on the minds of scholars in the marketing world. We need a precise definition of identity and a set of key principles to help guide where to put the magnifying glass to build a deeper understanding.

In recent work, we set forth a unifying definition of identity as “any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 312). Building from this definition, we further advocated for five unifying principles that have received consistent support within identity research in marketing. These principles provided an overarching lens for understanding the many effects of identity salience, identity association, identity verification, identity conflict and identity relevance.

As we began our own program of research to tease apart and deeply understand these five principles, it occurred to us that enlisting scholarly help is an extremely valuable exercise: recruit the best of the best in the field of marketing, to take their specific areas, meticulously dissect and diagnose their fields of study in the context of this five-principle framework. The *Handbook of Research on Identity Theory in Marketing* is the result of those efforts. We believe that this volume represents a careful, innovative and important treatment of identity. We are quite proud of the depth of intellectual talent that has so graciously agreed to take time to dive into these five principles. Each chapter rigorously relates specific areas of expertise that marketers, brand managers, and public policy advocates care about. The volume gives us a full view of key aspects of how deeply

integral identity and identity theory is to the field of marketing. We have divided the 31 chapters into five parts, each built around a single principle. To help frame that presentation, we wanted to take a moment to formally introduce each principle here and discuss what each chapter adds to our understanding of that principle.

Part I of this *Handbook* includes six fantastic chapters focused on the identity salience principle: “Factors that increase the salience of a particular identity within a person’s self-concept will increase the probability that the identity will have a subsequent influence on the person’s attitudes and behavior” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 313). This identity salience part begins with a review of identity salience research and the development of proscriptive guidelines for triggering salience with subtle interventions in real-world practice (Kettle, Chapter 1). A chapter that integrates research on identity salience with research on goal activation follows. This chapter proposes that the co-activation of goals and identities may dramatically influence traditional salience-driven behaviors (Laran, Chapter 2). The third chapter leverages insights from evolutionary psychology to model how and when identities are adopted and become salient (Jones, Durante and Griskevicius, Chapter 3). The final three chapters in this part take a deeper dive into specific consequences of heightened identity salience. This includes investigations of the effect of identity salience on signaling through luxury consumption (Wilcox, Chapter 4), creativity (Mehta, Xu and Dahl, Chapter 5) and response to victim groups after one’s moral identity is made salient (Graso, Aquino and Ok, Chapter 6).

Part II of this *Handbook* includes five excellent chapters that investigate the identity association principle: “When stimuli become associated with a positively regarded identity, those stimuli will receive more positive evaluations and can acquire other identity-related content independent of any explicit processing of the association” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 315). This part begins with two chapters that investigate the implicit and explicit drivers of identity association. The first builds from the conception of the self as an associative structure in memory and discusses the non-conscious relationships between consumer identity, stereotypes and self-esteem (Connors and Perkins, Chapter 7). The second association chapter identifies the more conscious drivers of self-brand connection and argues that both experiential and symbolic drivers of association should be a part of self-brand connection measures (Escalas, Gallo and Gaustad, Chapter 8). Next is a chapter that argues for actual or perceived ownership as a key driver of consumer tendencies to categorize objects as part of the self. This influences product perceptions even in product-irrelevant domains (Johar, Chung and Weiss, Chapter 9). The next chapter proposes that much of the power of identity association comes from self-esteem boosts that occur

after selective comparisons across temporal domains of the self (Dagogo-Jack, Chapter 10). The final chapter in this part flips identity association on its head and investigates the drivers of consumer response to products connected to negatively regarded identities and/or dissociative reference groups (Simpson, Dunn and White, Chapter 11).

Part III of this *Handbook* includes seven groundbreaking chapters focused on the identity verification principle: “Feedback from the external environment will be introspectively processed to determine progress toward the ideal representation of an identity” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 317). This part begins with an investigation of five different classes of compensatory consumption behaviors (direct resolution, symbolic self-completion, fluid compensation, dissociation and escapism) that verify desired identities (Rucker and Cannon, Chapter 12). The second chapter of the part develops a model to predict when identity threats will prompt verification. This work argues that the specific identity associations that are threatened dictate response (Spangenberg and Angle, Chapter 13). Next are two related chapters that discuss the role of memory in identity verification. The first of these proposes that consumers systematically acquire and retain objects and photos that can serve as future memory pointers to important identities (Zauberman, Diehl and Barasch, Chapter 14). The second investigates how consumer memory for whom they used to be, as well as their predictions for whom they will become, drive perceptions of personal continuity that can help them to verify desired identities (Urminsky and Bartels, Chapter 15). The final three chapters in this part investigate very novel means of increasing (or inhibiting) identity verification: the use of technology (Leung, Paolacci and Puntoni, Chapter 16), the experience of pain (Scott, Husemann and Hill, Chapter 17) and the use of language to create, enact and verify consumer identities (Lelchuk, Gordon, Ringberg and Luna, Chapter 18).

Part IV of this *Handbook* includes five thought-provoking chapters focused on the identity conflict principle: “Individuals are motivated to reduce conflict across multiple identities and can do so by managing the relative salience of their various conflicting identities” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 318). We open the identity conflict part with a chapter that highlights the challenges of studying multiple identities simultaneously, and investigates how the number, complexity and similarity of identities within a consumer’s self-structure influences their ability to resolve conflicts between component identities (Winterich, Coleman and Dommer, Chapter 19). The second chapter in this part argues for a causal centrality approach to understanding identity conflict. This approach proposes that some identities are more causally central than others. This influences their interplay and relative dominance in behavioral determination (Chen, Chapter 20).

Next is a chapter that argues that dyadic decision contexts can serve as both a source of identity conflict and as a potential means of identity conflict resolution (Nikolova and Lamberton, Chapter 21). In a similar vein, the next chapter reviews research on globalization and cultural identities to identify the drivers of cultural identity conflict, particularly among multicultural consumers (Torelli and Oh, Chapter 22). We conclude the identity conflict part with a chapter that investigates the behavioral consequences of actual and desired attitude conflict, with particular attention to attitude conflicts that arise from one's consumer identities (Wheeler and DeMarree, Chapter 23).

The final part of this *Handbook*, Part V, includes eight cutting-edge chapters focused on the identity relevance principle: "When identity information is deliberately processed, its influence will be greatest on stimuli that possess object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance, action relevance or evaluation relevance to the identity" (Reed et al. 2012, p. 316). The chapters in this part all investigate the power of identity in domains of high prominence and importance in modern society. The first two chapters in this part develop models to understand the role of identity in two contentious, and often related, issues of our time: religion (Barbour, Mandel and Cohen, Chapter 24) and politics (Briley, Jung and Danziger, Chapter 25). Attention then turns to identity relevance and expression in the two dominant social consumer contexts of our time: social media (Grewal and Stephen, Chapter 26) and retail environments (Argo, Chapter 27). A pair of chapters that look at two opposing behaviors follow: the identity drivers of charitable giving (Shang, Chapter 28) and of emerging materialism among children (Chaplin, Shrum and Lowrey, Chapter 29). The next chapter extends relevance outward and investigates how identity-relevant information helps consumers to evaluate choices of others, with particular focus on how the wealth status of others influences the perceived morality of their actions (Olson, McFerran, Morales and Dahl, Chapter 30). The final chapter of the volume explores how the meaning of identity-relevant symbols can change depending on the specific consumer identity, a shift that can prompt unintended negative consequences in consumer responses (Rank-Christman and Henderson, Chapter 31).

As we read each of these fantastic treatments, we realize the true depth of meaning embodied by the quotation that opens this Introduction. We as co-editors learned an extremely great deal from the scholars who have so kindly contributed to this work. As identity theorists, we indeed felt alive as we pondered the insights and "ah-ha" moments revealed in each of these chapters. We are undoubtedly excited and proud to be a part of this project. We hope you enjoy this work as much as we have.

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Quick chapter overviews

1. Identity salience: understanding when identity affects consumption
Keri L. Kettle

In this chapter, I argue that identity researchers should use natural, practical interventions to make identities salient. Identity scholars understand how identity salience should affect behavior, yet struggle to effectively predict when a particular identity will drive a consumer's real-world behavior. The cost of research leads scholars to use heavy-handed, unsubtle identity interventions that definitively make an identity salient, such as asking a person multiple questions about the focal identity. But, is this what identity salience looks like in the field? This main idea in my chapter is evidenced by the complete absence of similar activities in the field: when was the last time you entered a store or browsed a website and had to spend five minutes describing an identity-relevant activity before you shopped? I review recent research that – thankfully – provides hope that identity salience may be obtained with subtle cues.

This chapter is important because adopting more natural identity salience interventions, such as having a person sign their name, will enable researchers to study a wider range of identities, better understand the process by which particular identities become more (or less) salient, and provide practical interventions for marketing practitioners to use.

2. Nobody has to lose: introducing the concurrent identity and goal activation (CIGA) framework
Juliano Laran

Consumer psychology researchers have identified how people who associate themselves with a certain identity (“I am a college student”) or goal (“I want to graduate”) behave. Unfortunately, an association with certain identities or goals may lead to harmful behavior, such as when a college student identity is salient and as a result the person ends up binge drinking. In this chapter I propose a solution to this problem, arguing that there are situations in which it is important for consumers to have both an identity and a goal salient at the same time, as this may help consumers to avoid harmful behaviors. In the example provided above, making the goal “I want to graduate” equally as salient as the college student identity may be

a simple way to avoid harmful behavior. In this case, the identity by itself may result in harmful behavior, but not when the identity is accompanied by an equally salient goal. There are also situations in which a goal can result in harmful behavior, but the concurrent presence of an identity generates beneficial behavior. The chapter presents several examples of these goal–identity interactions and how they can benefit people.

This chapter is important because it emphasizes the need for academics to study how identities and goals interact, rather than studying how each operate separately. It can also help policy-makers to better structure appeals that will emphasize identity–goal combinations that can protect people against harmful behaviors. Finally, this chapter helps individuals to understand how they can change which goals they associate with certain identities in order to take advantage of the benefits that identity can bring.

3. An evolutionary approach to identity research

Aziza C. Jones, Kristina M. Durante and Vldas Griskevicius

In this chapter, we argue that a person can use an evolutionary approach to provide insight into modern identity, and we focus on the identity salience concept. An evolutionary approach to the study of behavior considers how a given behavior came about over the course of human history and how it may have served an adaptive function, and this perspective can lead to novel hypotheses. This main idea of our chapter is evidenced by our review of three different insights of evolutionary theory, and further illustrated as we use these insights to offer novel predictions in the area of identity literature. The first insight considers how natural selection has shaped the human brain to favor quick and easy categorization of evolutionarily ancient identities such as age, biological sex and health status. On this account, we predict that evolutionary ancient identities such as these will be more fixed within a person's psychology than identities that arose more recently in human history, such as race and political affiliation. The second insight reviews literature on life history strategies, which are life-long adaptive mechanisms based on an individual's childhood environment. We hypothesize that childhood environments will predict the identities that become most salient later in life. The third insight recognizes that humans have lived in small groups throughout the majority of human history. Humans formed identities around their health and group coalitions to enhance survival, especially when faced with an imminent threat. Hence, our final prediction is that the identity most salient in a human's cognition will depend in part on whether they sense threat (for example, disease, scarcity or violence).

This chapter is important because it demonstrates the predictive value of an evolutionary approach applied to the development of novel hypotheses

in identity research, and illustrates why a consideration of the evolutionary history of various identities is a tool that marketers can use to better understand the hidden forces behind identity-driven behaviors.

4. How signaling motives and identity salience influence luxury consumption

Keith Wilcox

In this chapter, I argue that certain identity-signaling motives are associated with specific aspects of consumers' identity. Thus, consistent with the identity salience principle, when these aspects of identity are made salient this increases consumers' desire for luxury products and influences the types of luxury products they consume. The main ideas in my chapter are evidenced by previous research examining how five distinct identity-signaling motives (compensatory consumption, communicating cultural capital, mating, self-expression and differentiation) influence luxury consumption, and are further illustrated in the areas of identity salience and conspicuous consumption.

This chapter is important because identity-signaling has been shown to be an important driver of luxury consumption. However, past research has not explored the role of identity salience in luxury consumption in great detail. This chapter provides a comprehensive examination of how identity-signaling and identity salience shape luxury consumption by presenting a unifying framework on the relationship. The main audience for this chapter is academics who will benefit from an overview of past research on identity-signaling, identity salience and luxury consumption. Additionally, the framework introduced in this chapter can serve as a guide for future academic research on identity and luxury consumption. Practitioners will also find this chapter useful as it discusses ways that marketers can tailor their marketing efforts to better connect their product and brands to the identity motives that underlie the decision to purchase luxury products.

5. The role of identity salience in creative thinking

Ravi Mehta, Lidan Xu and Darren W. Dahl

In this chapter, we explore how and why salience of various aspects of one's identity can influence creativity. Although prior research has examined a myriad of identity-related factors that have implications for creativity, such work appears to be rather fragmented and lacks a common thread tying different aspects of identity together for a comprehensive understanding of its impact on creativity. We offer an integrative and parsimonious framework consolidating the diverse body of extant work

to establish a better understanding of the relationship between identity salience and creativity. This main idea in our chapter – explication of the relationship between identity salience and creativity – is examined through three main factors: (1) chronic disposition (for example, tendency to question existing norms, and openness to new ideas); (2) the individual's environment (for example, socio-economic status and multicultural experiences); and (3) stimulus cues (for example, salience of social norms and group memberships) – that may activate different aspects of identity, and in turn influence consumer behavior in general and creativity in particular.

This chapter is important because through delineation of the relationship between identity salience and creativity, it not only integrates current knowledge but also opens up new avenues for future academic research. In addition, it offers suggestions for marketers and practitioners for inducing identity salience to facilitate consumer creativity. For example, marketing appeals or retail settings (both offline and online) that activate various aspects of identity can encourage consumers to demonstrate their creative side through contributions to companies' innovative processes (for example, during crowdsourcing tasks) and/or adoption of new products.

6. Branding virtuous victimhood: how activating the salience of a consumer's moral identity motivates resource transfers to victim groups
Maja Graso, Karl Aquino and Ekin Ok

In this chapter we argue that virtuous victim branding can be an effective form of marketing that advocacy groups may use to better the lives of people whose interests they want to advance. In order to improve their constituents' lives, advocates need to influence consumers to transfer resources (for example, money, time, admission of responsibility, or sympathy) to groups they represent. To do so effectively, we propose that advocates must signal that their constituents are: (1) victims of harm; and (2) virtuous. This main idea in our chapter is evidenced by a dynamic model of resource transfer between would-be benefactors and beneficiaries who claim a victim identity: signaling the virtuous victimhood of constituents encourages consumers to part with their resources, because this signal appeals to what consumers find satisfying about helping those in need. Our argument is further illustrated in the areas of prosocial behavior and moral identity: we theorize that helping virtuous victims not only elicits positive affect in consumers, but it also provides them with an opportunity to reinforce the salience of morality in their self-concept and to signal their moral goodness to others.

This chapter is important because it will help advocacy groups wanting to create an effective and durable brand for their constituents, while differentiating them from other victimized groups competing for the same

resources. We hope the ideas presented in this chapter will also be of interest to academics working in the areas of morality, identity and prosocial behavior, as they illustrate a novel form of identity signaling that can be used as a resource transfer mechanism which offers tangible and intangible benefits to both recipients and givers.

7. Implicit egocentrism in consumer behavior

Scott Connors and Andrew W. Perkins

Our self is the center of our reality. In this chapter we argue that this centrality of the self, or egocentrism, informs us in most (if not all) consumption settings. The self sits at the center of our cognitive world, and our understanding of that world is the result of a constant processing of information through the filter of our self. This main idea of our chapter is evidenced by current research that suggests that by linking a brand or product with one's self, positive feelings toward that brand or product will automatically be formed in memory. This is because people generally have positive self-esteem; in other words, they like themselves. This self-liking is transferred from the self to that brand or product without any effort on the part of the consumer. These self-associated brands or products are more easily remembered, have a positive impact on brand awareness, increase consumer-based brand equity (the effect that positive feelings toward brands has on the value of that brand), and affect product choice. Further, these positive feelings can be formed through a group to which one belongs: become a member of a group, and you will automatically form positive feelings toward brands to which that group is associated.

This chapter is important because we describe two new areas of inquiry that will allow marketing practitioners to understand how changes in the relationship between different selves, groups and brands affect brand perception. First, we describe how a change in brand strategy (for example, the Old Spice male grooming brand repositioning itself toward a younger market) can cause a cascade of changes to the brand knowledge structure in consumer memory, and then we discuss how the number of identities linked to a brand may protect the brand when its actions may threaten any one of those identities.

8. Reminiscing on self–brand connections: differentiating experiential versus symbolic origins

Jennifer Edson Escalas, Iñigo Gallo and Tarje Gaustad

In this chapter we argue that identity-based connections to brands can arise based on consumers' personal experience with the brand. Self–brand

connections (SBCs) represent the extent to which consumers have formed a connection between their identity – that is, their sense of who they are – and a brand. Research into SBCs has focused on the symbolic nature of brand linkages to identity, for example, how consumers form connections to brands to create, verify and bolster their identities, as well as communicate who they are to others. However, we find evidence that SBC can be based on personal experiences with brands, linking consumers to their past, reminding them of important people and events from their past, or providing a sense of nostalgia. Given that special experiences are central to identity, brand connections based on these occasions also become linked to consumers' sense of self. We develop a scale to measure SBCs based on personal experiences with the brand, and propose directions for future research where we expect there may be interesting differences based on whether an SBC was formed for symbolic purposes or based on personal experiences.

This chapter is important because there are many positive downstream consequences of SBCs for marketers: strong, favorable brand attitudes; high brand loyalty; forgiveness of marketing blunders, and so on. When consumers' identities are linked to a brand, then the company behind the brand may be able to gain an enduring competitive advantage, because this type of connection is difficult for competitors to imitate.

9. Ownership and identity: a cognitive perspective

Gita Venkataramani Johar, Jaeyeon Chung and Liad Weiss

In this chapter, we: (1) offer a cognitive analysis of the identity-related connections between consumers and their products; and (2) describe the marketing implications of these connections for product judgments and consumer choice. Consumers form connections with products and incorporate them into their identities through obtaining legal or psychological ownership of these products. These identity connections have important and diverse cognitive implications: they fundamentally change how people judge owned and non-owned products, as well as alter how people evaluate themselves and behave. We divide our review of these cognitive implications into two domains. We first build on egocentric categorization theory to outline how the connection of consumers with specific products (for example, an Apple computer known for its creativity) affects their judgement and behavior in relevant domains (for example, creativity judgments and performance). For example, we explain when and how owning (versus not owning) an Apple computer can boost the consumer's perception of their own creativity and subsequently increase their creative behavior. We then use the "see-saw self" model to describe how the connection between consumers and specific products affects their performance in irrelevant domains.

This chapter is important and meaningful to consumers, marketers and managers alike. It informs consumers of the various unintended ways in which the products they own can shape their judgments and behavior. It also informs managers and marketers of the specific ways in which gifts and rewards can serve as weapons of stealth influence that effectively shape employee performance and consumer choice. We discuss possible avenues for consumer identity research.

10. Temporal identity and the pursuit of self-enhancement

Sokiente W. Dagogo-Jack

In this chapter I argue that temporal identity, or the constellation of consumers' past, present and future selves, is a key source of positive self-esteem, and these positive feelings about oneself can transfer to brands and products that consumers associate with themselves. This main idea in my chapter is evidenced by research showing that consumers' feelings about themselves can automatically transfer to self-associated brands and products; and further illustrated in the areas of temporal self-appraisal theory, which holds that people can rely on their past and future selves, as well as comparisons involving past and future selves, to obtain and maintain positive self-esteem. Here, I suggest that the self-esteem that transfers from consumers to brands is at least in part derived from past and future selves, and comparisons involving past and future selves. Specifically, research on temporal identity has identified some psychological tendencies that enable people to maintain high self-esteem. First, people generally prefer improvement to stability or decline, and they exaggerate their past deficiencies in order to conclude that they have improved over time. Additionally, people distance themselves from past failures but feel psychologically closer to past successes. Finally, people project their perceptions of their own change onto external entities such as brands. Through these various temporal identity mechanisms, consumers can boost their self-esteem, a critical driver of brand evaluations.

This chapter is important because it illuminates an essential determinant of self-esteem and, consequently, brand and product judgments. Although consumers regularly consider their past and future selves, the influence of temporal identity on self-esteem has received little attention. By considering the self in terms of the past, present and future, academics can refine their understanding of how consumers gain and maintain self-esteem, and practitioners can more effectively leverage self-esteem to boost product evaluations.

11. A framework for considering dissociative identity effects in consumption

Bonnie Simpson, Lea Dunn and Katherine White

In this chapter, we argue that although people are often influenced by groups that carry positive associations (that is, membership groups they belong to and aspirational groups they admire), the motivation to avoid particular groups can also lead to compelling influences on consumer attitudes and behaviors. We refer to this avoidance effect (striving not to be seen as or associated with a negatively viewed “other”) as dissociation. In this chapter, we delineate three processes that drive dissociation effects: (1) consistency threat – consumers choose not to purchase a particular product because the group that has adopted it does not resonate with their private sense of self (and choosing this option would threaten self-consistency); (2) negative information – consumers will avoid products they view as imbuing their own identity with negative associations; and (3) misidentification avoidance – consumers will abandon products or preferences to avoid being misidentified by others as a member of a dissociative group. Further, we identify a fourth process, positive identity contrast, whereby a dissociative referent can lead to approach behaviors to positively differentiate the self from the dissociative group. We provide evidence for these dissociative processes, and discuss future directions for research that explore solutions to overcoming dissociative effects.

Practitioners can draw on this chapter to determine appropriate means to communicate or advertise a product relative to their target market, and also when non-target groups adopt their product. Consumers, through an understanding of dissociative motives, may be able to better accept and respond to dissociative out-groups. Finally, we explore dissociation through the perspective of how polarizing the world has become in many facets of life, such that demonstrating who you are not carries more weight than who you are.

This chapter is important because, by understanding how and why dissociation occurs, consumers may be able to overcome these motives in ways that lead to a more cohesive and compassionate understanding of others.

12. Identity and compensatory consumption

Derek D. Rucker and Christopher Cannon

In this chapter we argue that people are motivated to maintain or strive toward a desired identity. Desired identities can take several forms, such as that of a business professional, a university student or a writer. However, in everyday life, people encounter information or receive feedback that

threatens or challenges a desired identity. This chapter explores how people regularly use consumption to reconcile discrepancies between an actual and desired identity. This main idea in our chapter is evidenced by prior research showing that people engage in “compensatory consumption,” whereby they alter their consumption preferences and behavior preferences in a manner to offset a discrepancy between their actual and desired identity. This is further illustrated in the areas of intelligence threats, social belonging threats and professional identity threats. For example, an MBA student who lacks the prestigious job offers of their peers might compensate by purchasing a Rolex watch and expensive suit as means to affirm the identity of a successful business person. A college student may feel socially disconnected when nobody comments on their Facebook status post; to feel socially connected, they might purchase university apparel worn by their peers. An aspiring author’s identity can be challenged as they toss another page they are unsatisfied with into the wastebasket; as a result, they may purchase a new pen to signal to themselves that they are a true writer.

This chapter is important because out of all the ways people deal with threats to their identity, consumption is frequently used to assuage discrepancies between their actual and desired identities. Academics and consumers alike can appreciate the different consumption strategies that consumers adopt in their quest to maintain a consistent identity in the face of negative identity-relevant information.

13. Associations matter: revisiting the threat typology model

Katie Spangenberg and Justin Angle

In this chapter we explore types of identity threats and offer a framework for understanding why, when and how threats differ. Everyone has a sense of identity, or a set of labels they associate themselves with, such as nationality, gender or intelligence. These associations can be threatened in multiple ways. For instance, you could hear bad things about your home country, or you could be told you are a poor representative of it. Specifically, some threats result in behaviors that seek to verify an identity, while others lead to behaviors aimed at distancing the self from an identity.

The main idea in our chapter, understanding nuances of identity threat, builds from prior studies in consumer research that approach identity threat in many ways. We present an updated model of identity threat, the threat typology model, which conceptualizes threats by the specific associations they target. The threat typology model presents three broad categories of threat – identity valence threat, identity strength threat and self-esteem threat – and offers predictions for whether a threat will result in behavior that approaches or avoids the focal identity.

This chapter is important because brands invest millions of dollars to cultivate and reinforce customers' brand affiliation. Certain identity threats undermine consumer–brand affiliation, while other types of identity threats bolster it. For example, a marketer might anticipate that using a female spokesperson will increase consumer–brand affiliation. However, research finds that if a female spokesperson represents a technology product, negative stereotypes about women and technology are activated, resulting in decreased customer interest. We also suggest that there are times when brands would benefit from the counterintuitive approach of making customers feel less secure in their connection to a brand. Thus, marketing managers add value to their firms by understanding consumer behaviors in response to threats.

14. Memory pointers and identity

Gal Zauberman, Kristin Diehl and Alixandra Barasch

In this chapter we argue that the role and use of memory pointers – objects or photos that people believe will help them remember a particular experience – is critical to how people establish and verify their identities. People's experiences are central to their identities (for example, attending college, special trips), but it is not only the actual experiences one has: possibly more important are the memories of these experiences. Since people generally believe in the importance of experiences to their identities over time, people purposefully invest in memory pointers, tangible reminders that will help them cue these memories later on, both for themselves and to be shared with others. People believe that memory pointers are more effective at triggering memories when they are specific to a particular experience or setting (for example, a shirt with the dorm logo versus a shirt with the college logo), and thus they are better able to verify and shape one's identity.

This chapter is important because demand for specificity may explain why people take so many photographs, as photos are inherently linked to the particular time and place when they were taken. Taking photos as memory pointers can further yield the added benefit of increasing engagement with the experience that is being photographed, which amplifies positive experiences and also heightens one's visual memories of the experience. When memory pointers are acquired with the intention to share them with others, people select different types of pointers than if they intend to use these memory pointers only for themselves. For example, photo albums to be shared may include more staged pictures of people who are smiling, while albums for oneself may include more candid moments. As a whole, this chapter highlights the importance of memory pointer acquisition and usage in people's desire to verify their identities over time.

15. Identity, personal continuity and psychological connectedness across time and over transformation
Oleg Urminsky and Daniel Bartels

In this chapter we argue that a person's views about their identity over time are shaped by their own judgments of their personal continuity: the degree to which the person feels that the things about them that define them are likely to remain unchanged over time, in the future self. People's feelings about their personal continuity can affect their decisions about the future, such as whether to save or spend. People judge the impact of life changes on their identity based on whether the change is expected and how central the change is to their identity, and may welcome or avoid change based on the implications for their future identity. Because people generally think that they will improve in the future, the possibility that some aspects of their identity may get worse is threatening to their identity. However, because people have many aspects that make up their identity, not all changes threaten their identity equally; what matters is how central to the person's identity a specific aspect is. When people think that they will change as a person, and their future self will be fundamentally different, they are less motivated to invest or sacrifice for that future self. We review research which has studied how people think of their personal continuity in relation to anticipated identity-relevant changes, and how people's perceptions of their future self affect their decision-making.

This chapter is important because it bridges different academic disciplines that have studied identity (social, cognitive and consumer psychology, as well as philosophy) to propose a unifying approach to how people think about their identity over time and their future self. Understanding how people think of identity-relevant change may help to identify more effective ways to communicate with people about trade-offs involving the future.

16. How technology shapes identity-based consumer behavior
Eugina Leung, Gabriele Paolacci and Stefano Puntoni

In this chapter we argue that technology can both facilitate and hinder the process of self-verification; that is, how people monitor their progress towards being a particular type of person. We explore five different technological domains, namely the Internet, dematerialization, automation, artificial intelligence and human enhancement. For each technological domain, we review how technology expands the range of options that individuals have for holding on to identities and for positive self-verification, as well as the limits that technology can place on the same processes. This

main idea in our chapter is evidenced by recent research on identity in consumer behavior and marketing, as well as relevant research in psychology and other disciplines, including robotics, biotechnology and other technological domains.

This chapter is important because hi-tech products are becoming commonplace. As consumers rely more and more on amazing machines and algorithms for their needs, new areas are fast opening up for researchers interested in identity. How does the Internet allow people to monitor their progress in the journey towards being the kind of person they want to be? Can artificial intelligence limit the construction of new identities or the development of existing ones? What new questions emerge when humans are able to alter their physical and mental capabilities through human enhancement technology? Finding answers to these and other related questions is important and urgent, as in the years to come these phenomena are likely to have vast repercussions for consumers, businesses and society at large.

17. Identity verification through pain in extraordinary consumer experiences

Rebecca Scott, Katharina C. Husemann and Tim Hill

In this chapter we argue that through pain, identity verification work can be intensified, suspended or refocused. Identity verification is where consumers monitor feedback from their environment to determine the extent to which they are progressing towards their ideal identity. We study this process in three experiences where physical and mental suffering is commonplace: pilgrimages on the Camino de Santiago, Tough Mudder obstacle courses, and British football fandom. Pilgrims overcome painful blistered feet, and in so doing, reflect upon who they are, grow beyond themselves, and intensify their identity verification work. By navigating Tough Mudder obstacle courses and being crippled by the intense pain that stems from freezing water and electric shocks, consumers suspend the identity verification process. Hardcore British football fans treat pain as the trigger to refocus their identity verification work, as the physical suffering that comes from drug use causes them to rethink who they want to be. By exploring the interplay between identity verification and consumer experiences we illustrate how the feedback that triggers identity verification is not necessarily rooted in the external environment, but can also reside in painful bodies.

This chapter is important because it illustrates how pain is a driver of identity verification work, which previous marketing studies have not yet touched upon. Given the central and enduring role of experiences in

consumer society, and the pertinent role of pain as driver of sensation within emergent consumption experiences, our chapter informs understandings of identity construction and provides important implications for consumer research scholars and experiential marketers. For example, practitioners operating in experiential marketplaces such as sport, entertainment and travel may wish to note how identity verification can be drawn from “pain communities” that turn to the marketplace to relish in physical discomfort.

18. The creation of identity and brand meaning: the automatic versus creative use of mental models in language

Colette Lelchuk, Marianne Gordon, Torsten Ringberg and David Luna

In this chapter we argue that the use of brands to create a sense of self and identity differs radically across two positions based on different positions. This has ramifications for how we conceptualize the influence of language to make sense of self, including the use of brands as a symbolic resource in this process. The main idea in our chapter is evidenced by the presence of two opposing streams of literature, the cognitivist and the culturalist. The cognitivist position suggests that individuals have agency, which enables them to freely select from a toolset of internalized mental models to express a unique sense of self through language; whereas the culturalist position suggests that the toolset of internalized mental models controls individuals' identity formation. The impact of these positions is further illustrated in the area of the symbolic use of language and brands to create a sense of self.

This chapter is important because it highlights an apparent theoretical and conceptual inconsistency between two influential research camps in consumer research that affects how researchers understand sense-making and identity formation, and how brand managers ought to position and communicate the symbolic value of brands. It also speaks to an increasing interest within neuro-science research on whether executive functioning exists, and whether it is indeed in charge of guiding our thought processes.

19. The role of self-structure in managing identity conflict

Karen Page Winterich, Nicole Verrochi Coleman and Sara Loughran Dommer

In this chapter, we argue that it is not just the identities a person has, but the relationships between those identities and how they are organized, that shape behavior. For example, imagine two women who are both mothers, runners and lawyers. One woman sees these three selves as very interconnected and similar; her competitive spirit and assertiveness in the

courtroom is consistent with her approach to running races and parenting. The other woman, however, sees these three selves as quite distinct and separate; she leaves her assertiveness at work, sees her role as a mother as that of a nurturing teacher, and her running is just for enjoyment without competition. Despite having the same identities, these women have clearly different selves, which we might expect would change the way they respond to identity-based marketing.

The main idea in our chapter is evidenced by the difficulty people have choosing between identity products. Self-structure can range from very simple, such as just two identities that are very similar to each other, what we call a unified self-structure; to a very complex system, where there are many identities, all of which are quite different, a diverse self-structure. We find that people with unified selves experience less identity conflict when choosing between identities; because the small number of selves are all similar, choosing any particular identity is like choosing the others. On the other hand, consumers with more diverse self-structures – because each identity is very different from the others – experience a high degree of conflict, and thus find it quite hard to choose between identity products.

This chapter is important because we go beyond the content of the self (that is, the identities) to consider the structure of the self (that is, how many and how similar the identities are) to look at consumer responses, particularly identity conflict. This one example, of choosing between identity products, shows how important the effect of structure can be: two people with the same identity can have very different responses if that identity is in a unified structure versus a diverse one. While we explore the implications of self-structure on identity conflict, we suggest future research directions in this area, and encourage work that goes beyond the content of the self, and considers how the content is organized.

20. Causal beliefs in the self-concept and identity-based consumption *Stephanie Y. Chen*

In this chapter, I argue that consumers' beliefs about how the aspects that make them who they are as individuals (their identities, memories, moral qualities, personality traits, and so on) have shaped and influenced each other are a critical part of how they think about the self, and provide insight into how influential their identities will be on their behavior. More specifically, the more a consumer sees an identity as having caused or been caused by other aspects of who they are, the more important that identity will be and the more likely they will be to act in ways consistent with that identity. For example, an Apple-user who thinks that their choice of profession as a graphic designer and their personality traits shaped their

loyalty to Apple is going to be more likely to see the Apple-user identity as important and to do things associated with Apple-users (for example, wait in line for hours for the newest iProduct) than someone who has the exact same profession, personality and Apple-user identity but sees them as all relatively unrelated to each other. The main idea of my chapter is evidenced by a series of studies that find that these causal beliefs do indeed influence how important an identity is to a person, and is further illustrated in the area of identity-based consumption by a second series of studies which find that these causal beliefs also predict which consumers are more or less likely to make choices consistent with a given identity.

This chapter is important because it reviews a new way of thinking about how consumers think of the self and about identity-based consumption that focuses on beliefs about the relationships between identities and the rest of the self, a factor that has largely been ignored by other approaches to these topics. In doing so, this chapter provides a deeper understanding of what makes an identity important, and which consumers will be more or less likely to make choices that reflect their identities.

21. No (wo)man is an island: dyadic decision-making and identity conflict

Hristina Nikolova and Cait Lamberton

In this chapter, we argue that dyadic as opposed to individual decision-making contexts can both create and resolve identity conflicts in ways that are important for consumer behavior and well-being. First, we posit that dyadic contexts could create identity conflict because of possible assimilation of one's partner's identity, the development and adoption of a new couple-oriented identity, or simply the emergence of socially activated goals. Second, we also argue that in addition to being a source of identity conflict, dyadic contexts could also offer means for its resolution. Specifically, during major life transitions (for example, retirement and the beginning of parenthood), when identity is most threatened, dyadic contexts can help to resolve identity conflict and aid in the transition to new identities.

This chapter is important because if we can understand the way that being in couples can both create identity conflict and push us toward resolution, we can understand the way in which non-solo experiences can help us grow toward our desired identity or change us in ways that might serve to further isolate us. Furthermore, the chapter raises interesting and important questions for future research that could help to illuminate whether the identity conflicts and resolutions we might experience in the context of couples, family units, work partnerships or friendships should

be considered a net positive or negative force for our identities, lives and relationships.

22. Cultural identities in the era of globalization: implications for consumer behavior

Carlos J. Torelli and Hyewon Oh

In this chapter we review recent research on globalization, cultural identities, and branding to explain how multicultural consumers navigate a marketplace loaded with a mixture of cultural meanings. The main idea is that globalization promotes culture-mixing within the individual, as well as outside the individual in products and brands. Culture-mixing can create conflict within the individual, and may result in negative brand evaluations. However, resolving cultural conflict can improve consumer well-being and generate favorable brand attitudes. The chapter identifies multiple factors that determine the extent to which cultural conflict is resolved, and outlines an agenda for future research in this area.

This chapter is important because globalization is bringing brands that symbolize a variety of cultures to a consumer population that is also growing in cultural diversity. In this environment, it is critical for marketers to understand how consumers respond to the cultural meanings in brands.

23. Prevalence, antecedents and consequences of actual–desired attitude discrepancies

S. Christian Wheeler and Kenneth G. DeMarree

In this chapter, we argue that people can want to have attitudes that differ from their actual attitudes and that these “desired attitudes” can have important implications for persuasion and behavioral outcomes. This difference between a person’s desired attitude (for example, liking American automobiles a lot) and their actual attitude (for example, liking them only somewhat) creates an actual–desired attitude discrepancy.

The main idea in our chapter is evidenced by research showing that actual–desired attitude discrepancies are pervasive and consequential. When actual and desired attitudes conflict, they cause evaluative tension, as reflected by feeling conflicted, feeling indecisive and feeling torn. This evaluative tension motivates behaviors that may be aimed at reducing the discrepancy, such as increased interest in information about the topic.

Desired attitudes predict people’s behavior and information processing over and above their actual attitudes. For example, people may consume products that they do not actually like, but instead consume products that they desire to like, sometimes because they want to adopt attitudes

consistent with a desired identity. Similarly, people will seek information and process information in biased ways so as to bring their actual attitudes more in line with their desired attitudes. An American who wants to like American cars more than they currently do, for example, might seek out and pay more attention to favorable information about American cars so as to generate an actual attitude more consistent with their desired attitude (and their American identity).

This research is important because desired attitudes have significant effects on persuasion and on behavior. Knowing about people's desired attitudes helps to explain why (actual) attitudes do not always predict behavior or persuasion, and reveals a hidden but pervasive driver of consumer behavior.

24. Religious identity in marketing

Joseph E. Barbour, Naomi Mandel and Adam B. Cohen

In this chapter we discuss the roles of religious identities in consumer behaviors. We propose that religious affiliation (for example, Muslim or Christian) and religiosity (that is, the strength of one's connection to religion) combine to form one's religious identity, which then becomes activated and utilized in certain consumer scenarios. An integral point is that while one may always possess a religious identity, this identity is only activated in consumer scenarios that are relevant to religious outcomes (for example, avoiding certain religiously forbidden foods). We discuss four dimensions of religion based on prior literature: beliefs, values, rituals and communities. Religiously relevant consumer behavior will likely reflect one, or some combination, of these religious dimensions.

Our chapter draws upon empirical literature in marketing and social, cultural and religious psychology to show that people often choose products and services because of their religious meaning (for example, wearing modest versus revealing clothing). There are two types of religiously motivated consumption: goal-related and symbolic. That is, a product might appeal to a consumer for its ability to help achieve an intrinsic religious goal (for example, a stronger relationship with God) or an extrinsic goal (for example, signaling religious membership or devotion to others). Throughout the chapter, we intermix empirical support for our claims with original examples to help further illustrate how these concepts work together.

The content of this chapter is important for marketers, psychologists and laypeople to understand, because it draws attention to just how meaningful and powerful religious identity can be in decision scenarios of all kinds. Though religious identity may not be relevant to all consumer decision scenarios, it may be particularly influential in the ones where it is.

25. Political ideology: basis for a dynamic social identity
Donnel A. Briley, Kiju Jung and Shai Danziger

In this chapter we survey evidence that consumers' political identities (for example, conservative, liberal) impact their consumption-related decisions and behaviors. As a result, in a consumer context conservatives are less likely to challenge organizations (complaining and boycotting), to adopt change (new product trial and innovation) and to choose unfamiliar, less established brands. This main idea in our chapter is evidenced by literature showing that conservatives (vs. liberals), who are rooted in a stronger need for security and uncertainty reduction, are more likely to defend the systems and institutions that protect the status quo and resist change. Importantly, the effect of political ideology is dynamic, with situational influences making consumers become more likely to embrace or resist change.

This chapter is important because addressing the vast array of critical issues faced by today's polarized society – including climate change, immigration, healthcare, gender bias and fiscal policy – will require academics, marketers and public policy officials to gain a thorough understanding of how and when political identity exerts influence. This knowledge offers a critical first step toward improving communications and messaging on these topics, and establishing bipartisan agreement.

26. Identity in the digital age
Lauren Grewal and Andrew T. Stephen

In this chapter we argue that identity expression, when done through digital and social media platforms has different ramifications for consumers from how identity expression has traditionally been studied in the offline physical world. This main idea in our chapter is evidenced by the different steps that occur for online, compared to offline, identity expression that change how consumers can create, maintain and express different identities that they may or may (or may not) hold in their physical lives. We discuss how digital identity expression can differ in its thought process and ramifications at each step of the process: (1) the antecedents to online identity expression; (2) the consequences of online identity expression; (3) the online platform chosen to express identity; and (4) possible audiences to digital identity expression. We also present some preliminary data which showcase that identity, when expressed online, may cause consumers to be identity-inconsistent in their subsequent behavior. This finding contradicts what identity-relevance and prior research would predict about behavior for a salient identity.

This chapter is important because the Internet is pervasive in people's lives, yet the way people can create, actively engage with or fulfill different identities using digital platforms is largely unknown. The insights of this chapter help to inform academics on future research that can be conducted on this topic; marketers and business practitioners on considerations they need to take when encouraging identity expression in relation to their products and brands on digital and social media; and general consumers in society on how they can best optimize digital platforms for their different identities.

27. The role of identity relevance in the retail environment

Jennifer Argo

In this chapter I argue that elements of the brick-and-mortar retail environment (both the physical environment, such as store layout and design; and the social environment, including other shoppers and salespeople) influence consumers using the perspective of a consumer identity researcher. My intent is to highlight how a variety of elements found in the retail space, from lighting to aisle width, to salespeople, and so on, can be identity-relevant for consumers and in turn impact their responses.

This chapter is important because it highlights a number of research ideas that could be pursued to further our understanding of the relationship between identity and the retail environment.

28. Identity and charitable giving: the six-self framework

Jen Shang

In this chapter I argue for the usefulness of a six-element self framework that includes I/me-selves, meta-self, not-I/me-selves and united self. Extant research illustrates how charitable giving can be increased by about 10 percent by focusing on only one or two I/me-selves at a time. I will argue that more substantive uplifts may be possible by tapping into other elements of my model. I provide examples of how fundraisers can utilize the conflict management function of the meta-self, so, for example, it is possible that Mothers Against Drunk Driving can raise more money if it taps into how mothers who lost a child to a drunk driver can transition from a victim I-self to a conqueror I-self. This is a meta-self function, because for quite a few months mothers may struggle to decide which I-self they should give dominion to when deciding how to live their lives (that is I-self conflict management). Such a message also has the potential to help these mothers feel better faster, compared to messages that tap into only one I-self at a time. I also give examples of how fundraisers can tap into donors' united

self, whose function is to derive the most harmonious self that includes both I/me-selves and not-I/me-selves. For example, supporters of Amnesty International may give because they care for those whose human rights are abused (for example, their loving I-self) and because they have no tolerance for such abuse (for example, their loving not-I-self). The harmony the united self drives is one in which Amnesty supporters fight for as long as necessary to care for (and express their love for) the abused. The united self balances the loving I-self and the loving not-I-self.

This chapter is important because hyper-personalizing fundraising communications under the guidance of the six-component self-framework can transform the quality of relationship that donors have with charities and the degree to which giving can transform lives.

29. Children's materialism and identity development

Lan Nguyen Chaplin, L.J. Shrum and Tina M. Lowrey

In this chapter, we argue that the development of identity and materialism in children and adolescents are fundamentally linked. Like adults, children use possessions to signal fundamental aspects of their identity to both themselves and important others. How their identity develops, and how they learn to signal their identities, results from important socialization factors, in particular, parents, peers and media. In terms of identity, we focus on three fundamental identity motives: self-esteem, personal power and efficacy, and belonging. We review research that demonstrates that the socialization factors influence identity development, which in turn influences children's materialism, or the extent to which they use possessions to signal identity. Further, we show that the influence of identity on children's materialism is especially prevalent when they experience threats or self-deficits in their identities.

This chapter is important because both marketers and public policy-makers need to understand how and why children become more or less materialistic. For example, legislation restricting particular advertising practices when advertising to children needs to consider developmental changes in which influences exert the most power. That is, at earlier ages, children may be more influenced by parents than by peers or social media; but this situation often changes as children approach adolescence. A clear understanding of how these six influences interact with one another is critical.

30. Identity-based perceptions of others' consumption choices

Jenny G. Olson, Brent McFerran, Andrea C. Morales and Darren W. Dahl

In this chapter we argue that studying “identity” means moving beyond the “self.” Consumers exist in a social context, meaning that the choices they make: (1) reinforce their own identities; and (2) provide information about who they are to other people. For example, someone (an “actor”) might choose to buy organic produce; someone else (an “observer”) may perceive this individual as an environmentally conscious Millennial with higher disposable income. Importantly, observers may use an actor’s perceived identities to judge the “appropriateness” of a given purchase. We illustrate these points by focusing on income identity (for example, socio-economic status) and ethical consumption choices (that is, choices that are prosocial but costly) in the United States (US). Across several experiments, we find that low-income consumers receiving government assistance in the US (“welfare recipients”) are seen as less moral when they choose ethical products, such as organic food and eco-friendly vehicles. This occurs in part because people expect those who are poor to be frugal. Conversely, wealthier consumers are seen as more moral for the same choices, in part because of a belief that they have earned spending freedom. We also find that these judgments extend to non-financial choices such as volunteering time.

This chapter is important because it highlights that who we are impacts perceptions of what we do, which may have consequences for our relationships with other consumers, government agencies and non-profit organizations. For example, identity-based cues may influence hiring practices (for example, poor actors are seen as less employable than wealthy actors), government policies (for example, some people may be seen as more “deserving” of aid than others), and the ability to solicit donations (for example, people donate less to a charity providing organic food versus conventional food to aid recipients). We hope our chapter inspires additional research activity into understanding how observer-based identity judgments influence consumer well-being and marketplace experiences.

31. When do identity-relevant symbols backfire? An exploration of identity-symbolic fixed and malleable connotations

Tracy Rank-Christman and Geraldine Rosa Henderson

In this chapter, we argue that identity-relevant symbols, at times, may backfire. We suggest that one-way identity-relevant symbols backfire when an identity is paired with a symbol that provokes negative mental

associations in the mind of the consumer. In this chapter, we introduce identity-relevant symbols as having fixed or malleable connotations. We propose that identity-relevant symbols may have a single meaning within an identity (that is, identity-symbolic fixed connotation), but multiple meanings between some identities (that is, identity-symbolic malleable connotation). The main idea in our chapter is evidenced by identity relevance, semiotics and symbolic connotations, which is further illustrated in the areas of self-concept mindsets, frame-switching and double consciousness.

This chapter is important because, until now, marketers and academics have used and discussed identity-relevant symbols as if they all convey the same meaning to all consumer identities. Yet, by making this assumption, academics and marketers fail not only to understand the value of marketplace symbols, but also to recognize how symbols can be used to connect or disconnect with consumers who obtain unique identities. In this chapter, we provide academics with future research ideas that may help to better develop our current understanding of identity-relevant symbols. We also provide marketers with ways to assess marketing materials prior to launch. Finally, we propose that further empirical support is merited around identity–symbol pairings.

PART I

THE IDENTITY SALIENCE PRINCIPLE

1. Identity salience: understanding when identity affects consumption

Keri L. Kettle

Brent Fikowski is an accountant, a former collegiate volleyball player, and was crowned the world's second fittest man at the 2017 CrossFit Games: "A big part of my identity has been I've been this really good CrossFit athlete who's also held a full-time job as an accountant for a private company. And I've been really proud of that" (Brent Fikowski).

Shon Hopwood briefly served in the United States Navy, then turned to robbing banks and, after serving 11 years in federal prison, became Law Professor at Georgetown University: "It makes me laugh hearing you say it out loud because there are days where it doesn't make sense to me, and I've lived it. That's because the bank robber's long dead and gone" (Shon Hopwood).

Consumers are not unidimensional people. Like Brent Fikowski and Shon Hopwood, they have a sense of self that ebbs and flows, in large part because they have multiple identities that form and dissolve over time – even if their identities are less extreme than those held by Brent and Shon. Some consumers, like Brent, are proud of their multiple identities and embrace the richness of their complex self. Others, like Shon, desire to hide or forget particular identities and thus suppress aspects of their self-concept. Yet, all consumers rely on those identities to make sense of who they are. How and when these different identities actively influence their consumption behaviour is a question central to identity-based marketing, and the focus of this chapter.

DEFINITIONS

The self-concept is germane to researchers in many diverse fields, ranging from organizational behaviour to child development, psychiatry to marketing. These distinct, but overlapping, literatures have used different terms interchangeably to refer to similar processes. Let me begin by defining key terms.

What is "the self"? Well, people have an overall sense of who they are. They are aware that they exist, that they exist separately from other people,

and that they have characteristics that define their similarities to and differences from others. Developmental psychologists tend to refer to this as the self (Harter 1999; Happé 2003), and focus on how the awareness of oneself forms (or does not form) over time. Children are not born with a sense of self, and it is thus central to human development to understand the process by which the sense of self is established and evolves over time.

Identity theorists have described one's sense of self as the "self-identity" (Aquino and Reed 2002; Kettle and Häubl 2011; Ryder et al. 2000), whereas others have used the terms "self-concept" and "identity" interchangeably (Baumeister 1999; Markus and Wurf 1987). More recent theorizing has clearly differentiated between an individual's overall sense of who they are, and specific clearly distinguishable identities that reside within the self-concept (Kettle and Häubl 2011; Oyserman et al. 2012; Reed et al. 2012). Consistent with this recent work, I use the term "self-concept" to refer to a person's overall sense of self, and "identity" to refer to a particular category label that resides with the self-concept.

It is important to note that a self-concept is not merely limited to identities. Each person's self-concept includes different aspects (Kettle and Häubl 2011), which include individual characteristics, real or perceived (Aquino and Reed 2002; Markus and Wurf 1987), as well as identities (Oyserman et al. 2012; Verrochi Coleman and Williams 2013), such as social or group identities (Verrochi Coleman and Williams 2013; White and Dahl 2007). Generally speaking, there is substantial overlap across the aspects of an individual's self-concept. It is well established that identities are associated with particular characteristics – accountants are detail-oriented and analytical, for example – but identities do not inherently create personal characteristics. Becoming an accountant does not cause a person to become detail-oriented and analytical, but having those characteristics makes a person more likely to become an accountant.

What does it mean for an identity to become salient? The key premise underlying identity salience is that the many aspects of one's self-concept cannot all be simultaneously occupying one's thoughts. Rather, individual aspects may become more or less active in one's thoughts over time, owing to any number of factors. This may be referred to as the identity salience principle: "factors that increase the salience of a particular identity within a person's self-concept will increase the probability that the identity will have a subsequent influence on the person's attitudes and behaviour" (Reed et al. 2012, p. 313)

Historically, identity theorists have confounded identity salience with the self-importance or centrality of an identity (Reed 2004; Stryker and Serpe 1994), as these constructs are highly correlated. The centrality of an identity describes its chronic role within the self-concept: an identity is

more central if it plays a more dominant role in defining one's overall sense of self, and is thus associated with a greater proportion of the individual's self-concept.

There should be little doubt that some identities are more self-important than others and, over time, it is reasonable to expect that an identity's centrality to one's self-concept predicts the amount of time it is active in one's thoughts. Identity salience thus becomes confounded with identity centrality when salience is measured rather than manipulated. Numerous articles in the marketing literature have labeled their construct as identity salience when, in fact, they were really assessing identity centrality (Arnett et al. 2003; Grier and Deshpande 2001; Marin et al. 2009). This distinction is critical because a highly self-important identity is not always salient. The essence of identity salience is understanding that particular aspects of one's self-concept, such as an identity, can be predictably made more or less active at a given point in time, and that doing so predictably affects behaviour.

IMPORTANCE OF IDENTITY SALIENCE

The history of mankind is littered with powerful examples of how behavior is changed by making particular identities salient. From the Crusades to the Holocaust to the Vietnam War, ordinary people have been driven to undertake extraordinary acts of heroism and evil when a particular identity dominates their thoughts.

We need look no further than the Rwandan genocide to note the power of identity salience. Although the exact history of pre-twentieth-century Rwanda is up for debate (King 2009), it is known that for several centuries Rwanda's two substantial ethnic groups, the majority Hutus and the minority Tutsis, cohabitated, spoke the same language, observed the same cultural traditions, and intermingled in marriage and military service (Waters 1995). They were, for all intents and purposes, one social group. Formal establishment of their ethnic identities arguably began when Belgian colonialists introduced personal identification cards in the 1930s (Waters 1995), upon which each person was categorized as Hutu or Tutsi.

The organized murders of the Rwandan genocide began on April 4, 1994. For the nine months prior to that, however, a newly formed radio station – Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines – broadcast pro-Hutu, anti-Tutsi propaganda, referring to Tutsis as (among other things) “cockroaches” who must be “exterminated” (Thompson 2007). Nine months of identity salience, followed by 100 days of genocide in which ordinary Hutus executed nearly 1 million of their fellow countrymen because they

were identified as Tutsi on their Rwandan National Identity Card. Identity salience is powerful.

Thankfully, consumer behaviour is typically more benign than genocide. Yet, the central point remains: if identity salience can drive individuals to unspeakable acts of evil, surely it can have substantive effects on consumption behaviour. So, how do we make particular identities salient?

Broadly speaking, there are two routes to identity salience, which I characterize as unsubtle and subtle. Unsubtle routes to identity salience involve unnaturally lengthy interventions in which the focal identity is discussed or elicited to the point where it is undoubtedly active in the individual's thoughts, irrespective of how self-important that identity may be to the individual. Subtle routes to identity salience use seemingly natural interventions that may be barely noted by the individual. Unsubtle routes are more common, so I will address these first.

A popular unsubtle method to invoke a salient identity is to simply ask people questions about that identity. I confess to having used this method myself, with much success. The expectation is that thinking about an identity, or identity-relevant concepts, causes the identity to become more active in one's thoughts. Seems reasonable. As one example, in a well-known study about math performance, Shih et al. (1999) recruited female Asian American university students with the goal of differentially activating either their gender identity or their Asian identity and then observing the effects on their math performance. To do so, Shih and colleagues asked these participants to answer several questions, which they manipulated to be either about gender-relevant topics (to make the gender identity salient) or related to languages and family history (to make the Asian identity salient). This general method has been widely adapted to different identities. For instance, Morris et al. (2008) made salient the political identity of Republicans and Democrats by asking them a series of questions about political identity; and LeBoeuf (2003) used the question method to make salient identities ranging from scholar to Asian. Asking people to think about a particular identity seems a sure-fire way to have that identity become more active in their thoughts.

A similar unsubtle means to identity salience is to ask individuals to recall and/or describe their own identity-relevant behavior. Recently, Verrochi Coleman and Williams (2013, 2015) made distinct identities salient (athlete versus volunteer) by asking participants to spend five minutes describing a specific time they performed in that role. Similarly, Reed (2004) made a family (versus independent adult) identity salient by asking participants to write five sentences describing that identity. Along the same lines as asking questions about an identity, engaging people to describe an identity-relevant action or situation seems to make an identity more active in their thoughts.

I have some concern that asking people to think about a particular identity can contribute to a process of identity reinforcement or dilution. Identity researchers tend to view identity salience effects as isolated events, where we temporarily make an identity active with the assumption that our intervention has no effect on its place within an individual's self-concept. Yet, we also know that identities strengthen (or weaken) over time, and we have some sense that this evolution results from the identity having been made more (or less) salient over time (Reed and Forehand 2016). As we ask individuals to think about a particular identity, we need to consider that the way we make an identity salient could impact the long-term role of that identity in an individual's self-concept. It seems likely that asking a study participant to write an elaborate story about their identity as an athlete (or musician) will reinforce the role of that identity. At best it might have a minimal, undetectable effect, but we certainly would not expect such an intervention to dilute that identity, would we?

A third unsubtle pathway to identity salience is to present statements or scale items, and manipulate the content of those statements to target particular identities. In the realm of Asian versus female identity activation, Cheryan and Bodenhausen (2000) made those identities salient by administering a ten-item Collective Self-Esteem Scale and manipulating whether the scale items were worded to reflect the collective Asian identity or gender identity. Likewise, LeBoeuf (2003) manipulated the salience of an undergraduate's business student (versus university student) identity by presenting a logo of the business school (versus university) and having them respond to items worded to target the focal identity.

Each of three aforementioned unsubtle methods (responding to identity-relevant questions, describing identity-relevant activity, responding to identity-relevant scale items) relies on the assumption that the resulting heightened identity-related thought accurately reflects that individual's own identity. This is a non-trivial issue, given that these interventions seem to work for almost everyone who may have that identity, irrespective of its self-importance. A possible limitation of these unsubtle methods, therefore, is that they could be activating expectations or beliefs about the identity rather than the individual's true self-concept. Though it is near impossible to determine the extent to which these interventions activate one's true sense of self, I would suggest that the less subtle the intervention, the greater the risk that it activates something other than the individual's identity.

A second limitation of unsubtle interventions lies in their heavy-handedness. It is easy to understand why researchers use these interventions: identity scholars have limited resources, inattentive participants, and skeptical reviewers. The cost of running studies leads researchers to

unsubtle identity interventions that are fairly certain to make an identity salient, rather than subtler interventions that may lead to (the unambiguously dreaded) ambiguous null results. When navigating the review process, it is much easier to argue that a lengthy identity manipulation generates salience as compared to something as simple as signing one's name. But, we must ask ourselves, is this what identity salience looks like in the field? When was the last time you entered a store or browsed a website and had to spend five minutes describing an identity-relevant activity before you shopped? If we are to guide marketers, we should be seeking identity salience interventions that reflect the real world. Identity researchers need to think: must we (figuratively) beat consumers over the head with an identity to make it salient? Thankfully, there is hope that identity salience may be obtained with subtle cues.

Several studies suggest that the presence of subtle identity-relevant cues or situational affordances can make an identity salient. For example, Forehand et al. (2001) have shown that the ethnic identity of minority consumers (but not ethnic majority consumers) can be made salient through simple identity-relevant cues in advertising, such as mentioning the ethnicity in the advertisement (Forehand et al. 2001), using same-ethnicity spokespeople (Forehand et al. 2001), or exposing individuals to identity-congruent brands and images (Chattaraman et al. 2010).

My own research points to two subtle interventions – signing one's own name and seeing another person's signature – that heighten consumers' sensitivity to identity-relevant cues. I have found that consumers are more sensitive to identity-relevant situational affordances after they have signed their name for an ostensibly unrelated task (Kettle and Häubl 2011), and that seeing another person's signature makes salient aspects of a consumer's identity that are relevant to the signer's identity (Kettle and Mantonakis 2019). Because people use their personal signature to represent their self in writing (Ham et al. 2017; Hawkins 2011), the personal signature of another person can essentially make that person an identity-relevant cue. Consistent with other subtle identity cues, the effects of personal signatures are moderated by identity self-importance, and thus only generate identity-congruent behavior when the identity is of high self-importance (Chattaraman et al. 2010; Kettle and Häubl 2011; Kettle and Mantonakis 2019).

The need for high levels of identity self-importance to enable subtle identity-relevant cues is both a blessing and a curse. It is a curse for researchers because it (conservatively) doubles or triples the number of participants required to conduct a sufficiently powered study (Simonsohn 2015). It also requires researchers to effectively measure identity self-importance as a trait variable, in addition to the focal elements of the

study; a seemingly small addition that actually complicates experimental design substantially. If you measure the self-importance of an identity before your salience manipulation, you may inadvertently make that identity salient and thus wipe out or inhibit any effect of your key intervention. But if you measure it after the intervention, it is possible that your intervention affected the self-importance of the focal identity, and then you are left with a tainted measure of your hypothesized moderator. I have had each of these experiences when trying to capture identity self-importance for use as a moderator, and I testify that these challenges limit the number of manuscripts employing subtle identity salience interventions.

However, a need for high identity self-importance means that observed effects should be more readily reproducible in the field because they work for the focal consumers – those to whom the identity matters – and consequently have greater external validity than unsubtle interventions. Marketers can more easily craft identity-relevant messages or add a signature to their label versus giving customers a lengthy questionnaire; and consumers are more apt to tolerate subtle interventions rather than surrender the time needed to engage with unsubtle interventions. Consequently, identifying and understanding the role that subtle identity cues play in generating identity salience is of tremendous value to the field of marketing.

WHAT'S NEXT IN IDENTITY SALIENCE?

I began this chapter by introducing Brent Fikowski and Shon Hopwood, two individuals whose self-concept includes disparate identities. Let's return to these two cases to illustrate four important issues for identity salience researchers to consider moving forward. These issues are: (1) the limited range of identities we study; (2) the role of personal characteristics in identity activation; (3) the salience of conflicting identities; and (4) the salience of complex identities.

Let's Study More Identities, Shall We?

A meaningful shortcoming of identity research is our tendency to examine a limited range of identities. Why is this the case? Well, in order to investigate a particular identity in an experimental paradigm, particularly when multiple experiments are required, researchers have had to focus on identities for which there exist generally agreed-upon associations, and that are common enough – and commonly held within a given participant pool – to gather a sufficiently large sample size. Gender and national or

ethnic identities tend to be the dominant identities investigated, as we know that we reliably find variants of those two identities in every sample. Every consumer has a gender, and every consumer has some form of national and/or ethnic identity. I confess to be as guilty of this practice as any identity researcher. With recent advances in our understanding of false-positive psychology, power and sample sizes (Simohnson 2015), this issue is not going away.

Yet, consumers also have countless unique identities. Moreover, marketers have moved far beyond targeting by broad categories such as gender and ethnicity, are keen to capitalize on distinctive identities, and with the growth of online marketing analytics are capable of targeting very specific types of consumers. Shon Hopwood and Brent Fikowski both happen to be Caucasian men, but any sane marketer would not consider them both as their target consumer. Their ex-convict/lawyer/accountant/athlete identities are perfect examples of identities that are shared by hundreds of thousands of consumers, yet virtually neglected by identity researchers. Moving forward, experimental researchers need to be creative in moving beyond gender and ethnic identities.

How, you ask, should we pursue more specialized identities? Well, the first step is to move away from Mechanical Turk and undergraduate subject pools, and instead to seek out groups of individuals who share a more distinct identity. These groups are relatively easy to find with a bit of looking, and quite eager to participate in identity-relevant studies. Recent work seems to be taking a positive step in this direction, with Verrochi Coleman and Williams (2013, 2015) studying athlete and volunteer identities, and Kettle and Häubl (2011) having investigated the running identity with an interesting field study. In my own work (Kettle et al. 2019), we have conducted lengthy field experiments with runners, with one of my co-authors successfully recruiting a group of elite marathon runners in one study, and a broader population of recreational runners in a follow-up study. Although many of our participants strongly identified as runners, in each of our groups there was a sufficiently broad distribution of identity self-importance to enable us to use identity self-importance as a moderator, as I have suggested above. Whether you wish to investigate runners, soccer moms, or musicians, these groups are easy to access, and are likely to be more useful examples of identity salience for marketers than repeatedly contrasting men versus women or Asians versus Caucasians.

Can Personal Characteristics Make an Identity Salient?

Identity salience research has largely focused on how making a particular identity salient can activate associated personal characteristics (Morgan

et al. 2018; Verrochi Coleman and Williams 2013). The assumption underlying this is that personal characteristics are associated with identities. Yet, personal characteristics also operate separately as aspects within one's self-concept, and likely span different identities. For instance, Brent Fikowski's self-discipline is a characteristic likely associated with being an accountant as well as a professional athlete. In addition to focusing on how making salient one of these identities may activate a related personal characteristic, we also need to understand how activating aspects of one's self-concept can produce identity salience effects.

To illustrate, consider two identities investigated by Verrochi Coleman and Williams (2013) – athletes and volunteers – that are associated with emotional characteristics: anger for athletes, sadness for volunteers. If we were to prime anger in a competitive athlete, would that make their athlete identity salient? If so, would it lead to a direct activation of their identity as an athlete, or might it do so indirectly by making them more sensitive to identity-relevant situational affordances, as I have suggested above? We could ask the same questions about sadness for a volunteer. Now, what if we primed anger in a volunteer: would that suppress their volunteer identity?

The activation of personal characteristics is not new to marketing. As one example, advertisements from truck brands Chevrolet ("Like a Rock") and RAM ("God Made a Farmer") have focused on the personal characteristics of their blue-collar customers, albeit with these characteristics confounded with particular work identities. As other examples, Canadian Blood Services has used the slogan "It's in you to give" to suggest generosity as a personal characteristic, while Dove's successful Self-Esteem Project campaign has focused on low self-worth as a personal characteristic, with the tagline "You're more beautiful than you think." With such marketing efforts, the personal characteristic being targeted may influence consumption behavior directly by influencing feelings about the brand, but may also work indirectly by making a relevant identity salient. If I am made to think about myself as a giving person, it seems likely that activating that characteristic leads to thoughts about my past generosity, and thus makes my volunteer identity salient. Likewise, highlighting my hard-working nature seems likely to make my blue-collar identity salient, just as focusing on a woman's low self-perception of beauty may activate her gender identity. We need a better understanding of how activating personal characteristics influences identity salience.

Of course, these examples highlight personal characteristics that we have associated with a single identity. What if a personal characteristic is associated with multiple identities within an individual? Consider Brent Fikowski, who may be analytical in both his efforts as an accountant and as

an athlete. For Brent, would activating his analytic personal characteristic make his accountant identity salient, his athlete identity salient, or perhaps both? Or, as I will discuss below, is there a more complicated identity as an athletic accountant (or analytical athlete) to be activated?

There is also much work to be done on understanding the role of personal characteristics in reinforcing versus diluting identities (Reed and Forehand 2016). Identity researchers tend to view the ebb and flow of identities as the direct result of those identities becoming more or less chronically activated over time. However, identities are associated with certain personal characteristics, and it seems likely that activating a particular personal characteristic may indirectly reinforce an associated identity, or dilute a conflicting identity. As one example, physical and mental strength are characteristics associated with the athlete identity. Reinforcing those personal characteristics, such as through self-talk (“I am strong”) or physical strength training could reinforce an individual’s athlete identity. Moving away from the athlete identity, being nurturing is a personal characteristic associated with the parent identity, and many people struggle to see themselves as parents because they do not view themselves as nurturing individuals (Rane and McBride 2000). It seems likely that developing or activating one’s nurturing characteristics could reinforce the parent identity, whereas highlighting conflicting characteristics, such as being a neglectful individual, could serve to dilute that identity.

What About Conflicting Identities?

There remains much to understand about how identity salience works with competing or conflicting identities; an important question, given that many consumers have deeply contrasting identities with seemingly little overlap (Bodenhausen 2010). Just as Brent Fikowski has conflicting accountant and athlete identities, Shon Hopwood may see very little overlap between his identity as an ex-convict and his identity as a legal scholar. In the limited research that has examined conflicting identities, unsubtle interventions have been used to clearly make one identity salient over the other (Cheryan and Bodenhausen 2000; Shih et al. 1999). As these authors have noted, it remains an open question as to how behavior would be affected should an effort be made for both identities to become salient (Shih et al. 1999). Presumably, if researchers attempted to make salient both the Asian and the female identities of female Asian Americans, the relative self-importance of each identity would play a role; but this question remains unanswered.

Moreover, there may be substantive differences for desirable versus undesirable identities. Here is where we can contrast Brent Fikowski

– clearly proud of his accountant and athlete identities – with Shon Hopwood’s desire to reject his ex-convict identity in favor of his lawyer identity. Building on these examples, several avenues for future research can be considered.

First, identities may simultaneously conflict and harmonize in terms of their associated personal characteristics, such as with Brent’s accountant and athlete identities. Both identities may be harmoniously associated with the characteristic of self-discipline, but conflicted with the characteristic of physical strength. When past research suggests that making salient one identity suppresses competing identities (Bodenhausen 2010), it neglects the multidimensionality of these identities. I would suggest that whether identity salience suppresses or activates distinct identities depends on the context, and which associated characteristics are afforded by the context. To illustrate, making Brent’s athlete identity salient would likely also activate his accountant identity in a context where the trait of self-discipline is valuable, such as when he is speaking to others about planning or when in an organizational meeting. By contrast, making Brent’s athlete identity salient would likely suppress his accountant identity in a context where physical strength is valuable, such as when he is helping a friend to move boxes or engaging in physical labour.

Second, identities may conflict or concur in terms of their desirability, as we see with Shon Hopwood’s ex-convict identity. Although it seems that Shon’s identity as a lawyer is related to his identity as an ex-convict, in that both aspects of his self-concept relate to his experience with the federal legal and prison system, being an ex-convict (versus lawyer) is an unambiguously less desirable identity for Shon to possess. Even though Shon states that his identity as a bank robber is “long dead and gone,” it seems likely that elements of that identity persist in spite of his wishes. Each of us has identities that, while less extreme than being a convicted felon, we cannot shake despite their undesirability. We need a better understanding of the process by which identity salience affects a consumer when the salient identity is one that they are ashamed of, or trying to suppress, versus proud of and seeking to reinforce. Does making an identity salient always reinforce that identity? And what effect does it have on related identities? Identities may be clearly related and in conflict, such as Shon’s ex-convict and lawyer identities; or they may be quite unrelated and in conflict, such as Brent’s athlete and accountant identities. Understanding the effects of identity salience on the reinforcement (and dilution) of other identities is an important path for future research, and requires thinking about distinct identities in different ways beyond seemingly obvious conflicts.

What About Complicated Identities?

Finally, it is necessary to move beyond clearly defined identities such as athlete or musician, and consider more ambiguous and complex identities (LeBoeuf et al. 2010). An important path for future identity research is to investigate deeper into complex identity structures, and understand how identity salience manifests with consumers who seek to differentiate themselves by affiliating seemingly disparate identities. It is pretty clear by now that we can guide consumers to make different decisions by making salient readily differentiable identities within these consumers (LeBoeuf et al. 2010). But how does identity salience work for someone who sees themselves as an intelligent athlete, or a scholarly soldier? How would we expect identity salience to manifest among consumers who view themselves as a combination of distinct identities (Berger and Heath 2007)? Among these consumers, could making salient a particular identity actually activate, rather than suppress, seemingly conflicting identities?

Broadly speaking, marketing scholars have used identity salience manipulations as the means, rather than the end, in their research programs. Identity salience interventions have enabled us to gain novel insights into the structure of identities (Verrochi Coleman and Williams 2013), the role of conflicting identities in guiding behavior (LeBoeuf et al. 2010), and the implications of consumer identities for marketers (Bolton and Reed 2004). With identity salience functioning as the means, there has been limited focus on understanding the process underlying the identity salience. This question is critical for identity-based marketing, as marketers would benefit from understanding the conditions under which they can predictably invoke particular identities in the field.

Consider a hypothetical brand that wishes to target current and former female university student-athletes. This is a substantial but thin target market with a distinct and complicated identity. It is an attractive market, as female student-athletes have a higher graduation rate than the general student population (Rishe 2003), but also complicated as female student-athletes feel different and somewhat isolated from their peers (Sturm et al. 2011). How should such a brand go about predictably making the female student-athlete identity salient when it engages its target consumers? Should it emphasize one element of that identity over others, such as by focusing on the athletic identity above the others; or should it focus on the complex intersection of these conflicting identities? Perhaps it should seek to activate personal characteristics that make female student-athletes distinct, such as their drive and determination; or personal characteristics that make them similar to the rest of the student population, such as their fears and self-doubts. How would the brand know whether subtle

or unobtrusive identity salience interventions would be more effective? Right now, the identity salience literature does not provide a clear direction for such a brand. Future identity salience research should enable us to more clearly guide marketers in all aspects of identity-based marketing.

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2. Nobody has to lose: introducing the concurrent identity and goal activation (CIGA) framework

Juliano Laran

NOBODY HAS TO LOSE: THE BENEFITS OF CONCURRENT IDENTITY AND GOAL ACTIVATION

A large amount of research on identity-based motivation relies on the identity salience principle (Reed II et al. 2012), according to which the activation of an identity leads to behaviors consistent with that identity (Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Maldonado et al. 2003; Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2007). For example, a student identity can lead a consumer to buy books, in the United States a National Football League (NFL) identity can lead a consumer to buy the team jersey, and a clubber identity can lead a consumer to buy flashy clothes. Similarly to identity research, a large amount of goal pursuit research examines how the activation of a goal leads to behavior consistent with that goal (Brendl et al. 2003; Chartrand et al. 2008; Kivetz et al. 2006; Laran et al. 2008). For example, a goal to be more productive can lead a consumer to buy a time management app, a goal to have fun can lead a consumer to buy a karaoke machine for their home, and a goal to impress others may lead a consumer to buy a luxury product.

Clearly, research on the consequences of identity activation and research on the consequences of goal activation share a lot of similarities. In fact, an identity has been defined as the set of traits, characteristics, and goals a person possesses (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Oyserman 2001, 2009), or any category a person associates themselves with (Reed II et al. 2012). Despite the similarities, and the fact that some researchers consider goals as part of the mental representation that characterizes certain identities, these two research streams have grown mostly independent. In fact, some researchers from different sides (identity, goals) have argued that it is the activation of one or the other, but not both, that determines the judgments and behaviors they have investigated (e.g., Dijksterhuis et al. 2007; Wheeler et al. 2007; see Kirmani 2009 for a related argument). As a result of this independence, identity research has underexplored the characteristics of a goal that can aid decision-making when an identity is active. Likewise,

goals research has underexplored the characteristics of an identity that can aid decision-making when a goal is active.

This chapter offers some guidance on the integration of identity and goals research. Research on identity has demonstrated that many times the activation of an identity can lead to behaviors that are not beneficial, such as smoking, unhealthy eating, or drinking (Oyserman et al. 2007; Werch et al. 2008). I will describe contexts in which the activation of an identity may lead to harmful behaviors, but the concurrent activation of a goal can reverse this effect. For example, if a college student identity becomes temporarily more associated with the goal to be social with peers, this identity can cause excessive drinking. Concurrently activating the goal to graduate, however, may actually lead to less drinking and more studying compared to when the identity is not salient. Alternatively, research on goals has demonstrated that the activation of a goal can lead to goal-inconsistent behaviors, such as excessive spending, lack of care about one's well-being, and unhealthy eating (Chartrand et al. 2008; Fishbach et al. 2006; Laran and Janiszewski 2009). I will describe contexts in which the activation of a goal may not lead to beneficial behaviors, but concurrently activating an identity can reverse this effect. For example, a goal to be productive at work may lead to stress and decreased productivity if an individual does not perceive their productivity level as sufficient. The concurrent activation of the identity "I am someone who manages their time well," however, may actually lead to increased productivity compared to when the goal is not active.

In summary, this chapter presents an integrative framework of concurrent identity and goal activation (CIGA). The value of the CIGA framework lies in demonstrating that there is little reason to argue that an identity or a goal uniquely influences behavior by itself, without the need to investigate the other. Instead, the joint influence of these concepts on behavior should be studied and even celebrated, as studying them together can provide insights that the two separate areas have not been able to provide so far.

CONSEQUENCES OF IDENTITY AND GOAL ACTIVATION

Researchers have proposed different definitions of an identity, also referred to as self-concept (Neisser 1988; Oyserman 2001; Wheeler et al. 2007). An identity refers to who a person is and how a person's behavior defines who they are, in terms of both their personal and their social identities (Fiske et al. 1998; White and Dahl 2007). A more parsimonious definition, which eliminates the need for the personal versus social identity distinction,

postulates that any category label a person is associated with is an identity (Reed II et al. 2012). Several findings illustrate the role of identity activation in consumer behavior.

First, consumers indicate higher preference for brands that are congruent with their self-schemas when these self-schemas are more salient (Aaker 1999). Second, when business students had their identity threatened by being told that computer science students were the most effective at composting efforts, they showed higher public intentions to compost (White et al. 2014). Third, incorporating a brand community such as Apple into one's identity can both influence behaviors related to the brand (for example, buy Mac) and those that are not directly related (for example, dressing like a creative person; Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). The implication is that salient identities have a broad array of influence, and that this influence can also be present when a consumer feels their identity is threatened.

Different from an identity, a goal is defined as a desirable end state that a person wants to achieve (Brendl et al. 2003; Laran and Janiszewski 2009). Thus, a goal is not a defining characteristic of who someone is, but a specific state. Similar to an identity, an active goal motivates an array of behaviors. For example, exposure to the brand name Walmart makes consumers want to save money (Chartrand et al. 2008). In addition, exposure to the brand name Apple makes consumers act more creatively (Fitzsimons et al. 2008). Finally, exposure to a word such as "impress" leads consumers to buy fancy (versus fun) gifts for someone they know (Laran et al. 2008). Importantly, goal pursuit has characteristics that make it different from what happens when an identity, self-concept, or just a general semantic concept is activated.

First, a small delay between goal activation and pursuit increases the strength of the goal. When consumers were exposed to the brand name Apple, they showed more creativity in a task involving coming up with creative uses for an object, and this effect was stronger after a five-minute delay (Fitzsimons et al. 2008). Second, goals are only pursued when they are associated with positive affect. When the goal to socialize was active, people worked harder on a task that would give them a chance to go to a party, but did not show this behavior when the goal to socialize was paired with negative content (Aarts et al. 2007). Third, because goals refer to a state that people are trying to achieve, the valuation of means that can serve the goal varies based on whether goal pursuit is considered ongoing or finished. People who were thirsty responded more quickly to words such as "water" and "juice," an effect that disappeared once participants had the chance to drink water (Ferguson and Bargh 2004). Thus, goal pursuit has special properties that makes it different from the activation of an identity (Förster et al. 2009; Laran et al. 2016).

Despite the fact that an identity can be associated with different goals (for example, an athlete identity can be associated with the goals to be fit, a team player, and popular), researchers have not fully integrated these areas of research. This integration could bring advantages, as the behaviors resulting from identity and goal activation are not always beneficial, and people do not always behave in a way that is consistent with the activated identity or goal. In fact, identities include both positive and negative behaviors (Oyserman 2009), and goal activation may lead to behaviors that are inconsistent with the goal (Laran et al. 2011; Laran and Janiszewski 2009). In the next section, I will discuss situations in which separate identity and goal activation may not lead to beneficial behavior, and how the concurrent activation of a goal or identity may offer a remedy to help individuals in these situations.

WHEN IDENTITY ACTIVATION DOES NOT BENEFIT THE INDIVIDUAL: HOW A GOAL CAN HELP

The activation of an identity or goal does not always lead to behavior that is consistent with the identity/goal or behavior that could be considered beneficial to the individual. I propose that there are types of contexts in which activating both an identity and a goal provides benefits above those of each of these constructs separately. Thus, instead of thinking of an identity and a goal as constructs that should be activated separately, the CIGA framework encourages researchers to think of how identity and goals interact to influence behavior. This framework takes advantage of the fact that an identity is a category label that represents what a person thinks, feels and does; therefore, goals are part of the mental representation of the identity (Reed II et al. 2012). In this section, I will discuss two contexts in which the activation of an identity fails to generate beneficial behavior, but the simultaneous activation of a goal helps because characteristics of these contexts actually enhance goal pursuit. Importantly, the activation of the identity and the goal will motivate behavior above what would be expected from simple goal activation. Even though goal activation motivates behavior by itself in these contexts, I propose that an active identity provides a guiding principle for the goal (that is, “the goal is part of who I am”), which further motivates behavior.

A Social Identity Leads to Harmful Behavior

The same processes that link an identity activation to beneficial behaviors can lead to potentially negative, harmful behaviors. For example, making

a low-income identity salient made participants feel less in control of their future health and less successful in accessing their health knowledge, which could have consequences for how well they take care of their health (Oyserman 2007). In addition, stronger identification with reference groups is associated with binge drinking in college (Reed et al. 2007). These findings suggest an opportunity for researchers to investigate how to avoid these negative consequences.

One characteristic of a goal that distinguishes it from an identity is value, which represents the avoidance of negative end states. People pursue goals by focusing on behaviors that will lead to a positive end state and inhibiting behaviors that will lead to a negative end state (Aarts et al. 2007; Custers and Aarts 2005). While successfully behaving in accordance with certain identities may result in unhealthy behaviors (Oyserman 2007, 2009), this may be avoided when a goal is active. The same unhealthy behaviors would represent goal failure, an inability to exert self-control. This means that if a goal that is relevant to an identity is concurrently activated with the identity, the tendency to perform a negative, identity-consistent behavior may be blocked in favor of a positive identity-consistent behavior that will not result in self-control failure.

For example, if a goal to “have academic success” is concurrently activated with the identity “I am a college student,” the motivation to avoid a self-control failure (follow the goal) will lead to inhibition of negative behaviors (that is, I am a college student – drink more) in favor of more positive behaviors (that is, studying). Importantly, this would produce an additive effect, above that of merely activating the goal (that is, have academic success – study more and drink less). The presence of a salient identity that is tied to who a person is, even if temporarily, serves as a guiding principle for the goal, reinforcing the goal as part of one’s self-concept (that is, I am a college student + have academic success – even more studying and less drinking). Thus, the concurrent activation of the goal and the identity reinforce each other, motivating behavior in a context where the activation of the identity may lead to negative behavior.

There Is No Immediate Opportunity for Identity-Consistent Behavior

Another example of an identity benefiting from goal activation are contexts where an identity-consistent behavior cannot be performed immediately. When an identity is active and people cannot perform the identity-consistent behavior right away, the identity may be deactivated. This occurs because, different from a goal, an identity is often defined as semantic content, which may decay if not acted upon (Stryker and Burke 2000). For example, in the domain of priming traits associated with an

identity (such as politician, hooligan), priming a trait or stereotype (such as talking a lot, being rude) has a trait-consistent effect on judgment when this judgment can be performed right away (in 15 seconds), but not after a delay (Smith and Branscombe 1987). This indicates that a salient identity may not have an influence on behavior when the opportunity to act is not readily available.

One characteristic of a goal that distinguishes it from the activation of an identity is goal-delay escalation. When there is not an opportunity to pursue a goal immediately, motivation to pursue the goal increases, as the goal system becomes “hungrier” for goal satisfaction (Bargh et al. 2001; Laran et al. 2008). This means that if a goal is concurrently activated with an identity, not being able to perform the identity-consistent behavior will help to maintain the focus on finding an identity-consistent behavior, and in fact increase the motivation to do so.

For example, the identity “I am a smart consumer” may lead consumers to try to find a good deal, a behavior that is consistent with the identity. If the individual does not find an opportunity to make a purchase that is a good deal within a short period of time, the identity may become deactivated. If a goal to “save money” is concurrently activated, however, the lack of an immediate opportunity to find a good deal will strengthen the goal. Importantly, this would produce an effect above that of merely activating the goal, which would become more activated after a delay without the presence of an identity (that is, opportunity to save money is delayed – more willingness to find a good deal). In an additive effect, the presence of a salient identity serves as a guiding principle for the goal, reinforcing the goal as part of one’s self-concept (that is, I am a smart consumer + save money – even more willingness to find a good deal after a delay). Thus, the concurrent activation of the goal and the identity reinforce each other, motivating behavior in a context where the activation of the identity may not lead to identity-consistent behavior.

WHEN GOAL ACTIVATION DOES NOT BENEFIT THE INDIVIDUAL: HOW AN IDENTITY CAN HELP

The activation of a goal does not always lead to goal-consistent or beneficial behavior. In this section, I will discuss the other side of the CIGA framework, presenting two examples of contexts in which the activation of a goal fails to generate behavior that is consistent with the goal, but the simultaneous activation of an identity will help because characteristics of these contexts actually enhance behavior consistent with an identity. Importantly, the activation of the identity and the goal will motivate

behavior above what would be expected from simple identity activation. Even though identity activation motivates behavior by itself in these contexts, I propose that an active goal reinforces the identity (that is, “people associated with this identity have this goal and therefore think and act this way”), which further motivates behavior.

Goal Pursuit May Result in Negative Affect

One example of a context where goal pursuit may not occur is when pursuing the goal can possibly lead to negative affect. For example, an individual may refrain from exerting self-control when exerting self-control can disrupt their positive mood (Fishbach and Labroo 2007). In fact, the presence of negative affect during goal pursuit many times leads to goal abandonment, as people focus on feeling better emotionally (Cohen and Andrade 2004). These findings suggest an opportunity for researchers to understand how to help individuals pursue goals that are important, even if these goals involve negative affect.

One characteristic of an identity that distinguishes it from a goal is that some identities may embrace negative affect. Identity activation motivates behaviors that are associated with that identity rather than leading an individual to focus on the valence of affect associated with the behavior. In fact, the activation of certain identities may benefit from the presence of negative affect (Coleman and Williams 2013; Simpson and Stroh 2004). For example, the activation of an athlete identity may benefit from anger, and the activation of a volunteering identity may benefit from sadness (Coleman and Williams 2013). This means that if an identity is concurrently activated with a goal, the presence of negative affect will not stop goal pursuit when this negative affect can be useful for goal achievement, increasing motivation to pursue the goal.

For example, the goal “to accomplish important projects at work” may get deactivated if it generates a lot of stress, as the negative affect associated with stress may lead to the abandonment of goal pursuit. If the identity “I am a productive employee” is concurrently activated, however, the individual is more likely to understand the value of stress (that is, “Being on the limit helps me be a productive employee”), which will motivate goal pursuit. This would produce an effect above that of merely activating the identity, which by itself could lead to motivation in a context where negative affect is present (that is, I am a productive employee – accomplish important projects at work). The presence of a goal further reinforces the identity (that is, “people who accomplish important projects at work are productive employees”), which would motivate behavior even further (that is, I want to accomplish important projects at work + I am a productive

employee – accomplish even more important projects at work). Thus, the concurrent activation of the goal and the identity reinforce each other, motivating behavior in a context where the activation of the goal may not lead to goal-consistent behavior.

Goal Pursuit Involves More Than One Behavioral Choice

Another example of a goal benefiting from identity activation is contexts where consumers make a sequence of decisions. Many times, performing an initial goal-consistent behavior leads to an inference that the goal has been satisfied, which leads to subsequent behavior that is in opposition to the goal (Fishbach and Dhar 2005). For example, participants who had the perception that they had satisfied their weight loss goal were more likely to pick a chocolate bar over an apple as a parting gift (Fishbach and Dhar 2005). These findings suggest an opportunity for researchers to understand how to help individuals sustain the pursuit of their goals, even after they have engaged in initial goal-consistent behavior.

One characteristic of an identity that distinguishes it from the activation of a goal is that an identity is part of one's self-concept, therefore specific behaviors do not lead to satisfaction of the identity and subsequent behavior that is inconsistent with the identity. In fact, recent research shows that if an initial behavior is seen as consistent with one's self-concept, this behavior will lead to more motivation to perform similar behaviors subsequently (Salerno et al. 2015). For example, when people were proud (versus not) that they had put effort into exerting self-control, they incorporated this behavior into their self-concept, and were more likely to continue to exert self-control in a subsequent task (Salerno et al. 2015). This means that if an identity is concurrently activated with the goal, the tendency to perform goal-inconsistent behaviors after an initial behavior may be blocked in favor of additional goal-consistent behavior.

For example, if a person has the goal of saving money and has saved \$500 by not eating out at restaurants this month, the goal "to save money" may be considered satisfied and get deactivated, and lead the person to spend more money. If the identity "I am a frugal consumer" is concurrently activated with the goal to save money, the goal will not get deactivated after an initial behavior and the individual will not spend more. Again, this would produce an effect above that of merely activating the identity, which by itself could increase motivation after an initial behavior (that is, I am a frugal consumer – save money). The presence of a goal further reinforces the identity (that is, "people who save money by eating at home are frugal consumers"), which would motivate behavior even further (that is, I want to save money + I am a frugal consumer = save even more money). The

concurrent activation of the goal and the identity reinforce each other, motivating behavior in a context where the goal pursuit process may lead to goal-inconsistent behavior.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

At this point we have accumulated a considerable amount of knowledge on how identities (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Oyserman 2009; Reed II 2004) and goals (Brendl et al. 2003; Chartrand et al. 2008; Kivetz et al. 2006; Laran et al. 2016) influence behavior. Goals are clearly part of what an identity represents, and a person's identity can clearly influence the goals a person has. Despite this obvious truth, knowledge in each area has grown independently. Identity research has not fully leveraged how the activation of a goal influences the behaviors of people with different identities, and goals research has not fully leveraged how the activation of an identity influences goal pursuit. Here, I have set forth the CIGA framework of motivation. The framework extends the identity salience principle to specify the consequences of co-activating specific goals when an identity is active. The discussion of the framework presented two general principles of how the interaction between identity and goals works.

With regards to identity-consistent motivation, the framework proposed that making sure that the "right" goal is activated is helpful because the identity provides a guiding principle for the goal. This makes people interpret the goal as part of who they are, which motivates identity-consistent behavior. It is accepted that an identity (for example, "I am a parent") is associated with different goals (for example, "give the kids attention," "participate in school events," and "support the kids financially"). What is less known is how the activation of each of the goals associated with an identity can motivate identity-consistent behavior, and under which circumstances this is more likely to happen. I have provided some examples here, and it is important to note that the concurrent activation of a goal will not always motivate behavior when an identity is already active. It is likely that identities naturally activate certain goals, and that behavior in this case just occurs naturally, as a result of the active identity and its associations. These associations can include goals, traits, plans or specific behaviors. The opportunity for goal activation to have a more important influence occurs when the context does not allow for the identity to play a role, such as the ones discussed here (identity can lead to negative behavior, there is no immediate opportunity for behavior). This view implies an adaptive interaction between an identity and a goal, and the possibility of including both one's self-concept and the goals a person has within a single

framework. In this framework, when the self-concept is unable to act in a way that benefits the individual, a goal can be the most helpful, leading to behavior that is beneficial for the individual.

With regards to goal-consistent motivation, the framework proposed that an active identity is helpful because the goal reinforces the identity. This makes people more certain that this is an identity they want to be associated with (“people associated with this identity have this goal”), which motivates goal-consistent behavior. This relates to an important issue in goal setting and pursuit. The extent to which people are motivated to pursue a goal depends on whether they believe they can achieve the goal, how important the goal is and whether the goal is desirable (Bandura and Cervone 1983; Feather and Newton 1982; Förster et al. 2009). A salient identity favors the role of each of these factors, enabling motivated goal pursuit. Again, here, the activation of an identity seems to be the most useful under conditions where the goal would not be pursued (pursuit can generate negative affect, there is a sequence of behaviors). In contexts that allow for goal pursuit, there are several goal-related strategies individuals have developed, such as focusing attention on goal-related means, prioritizing behaviors and eliminating distractions (Gollwitzer 1999; Laran and Janiszewski 2009). The fact that an identity activation can be more useful in contexts where goal pursuit may suffer is another example of adaptive human behavior, and evidence that investigating the self-concept and the goal system as separate is not a good strategy (Reed II et al. 2012). If considered within the same framework, when one strategy for beneficial behavior (that is, goal pursuit) fails because of the context, a different strategy (that is, identity-based motivation) can intervene, leading to behavior that is beneficial to the individual. Any conceptualization that sees identity and goal activation as resulting from independent systems (that is, self-concept, goals), or fails to investigate how their concurrent activation influences behavior, is neglecting an important aspect of human behavior, and possibly missing an array of opportunities to help people.

This conceptualization opens the door for further contexts where the concurrent activation of a goal and an identity may help behavior. Consider the fact that different identities can interfere with each other. The identity “I am a Florida Gator” can interfere with the identity “I am a team player at work” for someone who has just moved to the University of Georgia as a faculty member. While this conflict may cause discomfort and goal-inconsistent behaviors, the adoption and activation of the right goal(s) can remediate the problem. For example, adopting the goal to “interact a lot with colleagues” may lead the person to actually become more involved with college football, which will lead to many interactions

with co-workers even if the Florida fan identity is maintained. This would also lead to comradery around what would otherwise be contention. Or, adopting the goal to “help university-related charities” may fulfill the team player identity while allowing the Florida fan identity to be fulfilled. The implication is that the benefits of activating goals along with identities go far beyond the specific examples discussed here, and these benefits can be specifically salient in situations where consumers have a hard time fulfilling their identity.

Likewise, consider contexts where goal pursuit can suffer interference from other goals. For example, the goal to “work hard” may receive interference from a goal such as “socialize with friends.” Interference from other goals, when they compete with the focal goal, can harm motivation to pursue a goal. The concurrent activation of an identity may help by activating an array of other goals: goals that facilitate instead of competing with the focal goal. For example, the identity “I am a hard-working person” can be associated with the goals to “work long hours,” “be diligent with professional obligations” and “pursue as many work-related projects as possible.” These goals can all facilitate each other, and offset the interference of competing goals on focal goal pursuit. Thus, an identity can also provide an umbrella for the activation of a larger array of goals, and help goal pursuit when otherwise there would be interference. More broadly, this implies that there are many potential benefits of activating identities along with goals, that these benefits go beyond the examples discussed here, and that they can be especially salient in situations where the mere activation of a goal may not be enough to motivate behavior.

In summary, there are many ways in which goals and identities interact, and this interaction can benefit an individual. I hope future research will focus on this possible interaction, exploring some of the ideas presented here. This strategy will likely be more fruitful to our understanding of human behavior than the current strategies, which either study identities and goals as completely separate or see them as competing with each other.

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3. An evolutionary approach to identity research

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This chapter uses the lens of evolution to examine the concept of identity. We explore how considering the time course of human evolutionary history and the adaptive function of behavior can uncover new knowledge of the processes behind identity. The aim of this chapter is to illustrate how an evolutionary approach to identity research can generate novel predictions and a deeper understanding of identity salience. Very few, if any, scholars of past work have applied an evolutionary lens to identity theory. Thus, we hope that this chapter spurs further future exploration and empirical work of identity-related phenomena.

We start with a brief overview of what it means to take an evolutionary approach to the study of behavior. We then explore these concepts in terms of evolutionary history (that is, the evolutionary time course for the emergence of human identities) and adaptive design (in other words, the function of identity categorization and signaling in ancestral environments). We discuss how an evolutionary approach can inform identity research by considering: (1) the evolutionary age of different identities; and (2) how variation in the environment and social worlds of our ancestors during the time of human brain evolution influences identity categorization and signaling. We conclude each subsection by suggesting new research predictions generated from an evolutionary-informed view of identity and identity-driven consumer behavior.

AN EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

Through decades of his own detective work trying to understand the puzzle of the vast variation in characteristics and behaviors of living organisms, Charles Darwin formulated the theory of natural selection (Darwin 1859). Natural selection is the progression of biologically influenced characteristics becoming either more or less frequent in a population over time. An evolutionary approach to the study of human behavior

starts from a fundamental observation that, on an evolutionary timescale, selection sifts through variations in traits or behaviors, favoring those that maximize fitness on average. By fitness, we mean the passing on of genes to future generations.

Niko Tinbergen (1963) cast the relation between evolutionary biology and psychology in terms of four questions. He argued that a complete understanding of a behavior or feature requires four levels of explanation, each of which addresses a distinct type of question:

- Proximate mechanism: What are the immediate causes and triggers of the behavior?
- Development: How does the behavior develop throughout a person's lifetime?
- Evolutionary history: When and how did the behavior arise in the course of the species' history?
- Adaptive function: How does this behavior solve an adaptive problem?

The first two levels address psychological explanations that occur within an individual's lifetime. These levels of explanation answer questions such as: What are the causal processes operating in current circumstances that produce the feature? What are the developmental processes that lead to its emergence? Factors in this category explain human behavior by considering environmental cues, physical states, hormones and neurological firing; all of which fluctuate in a person's day-to-day, year-to-year life. For these reasons, both the proximate mechanism and development levels of explanation reveal proximate explanations.

The other two levels are ultimate levels because these explanations reside within the realm of evolutionary biology. What is the evolutionary history of the feature from a historical standpoint? When did it originate within a phylogeny (an evolutionary lineage) and how did it change over time? What forces maintained the feature? The primary force maintaining most behaviors, features and modifications is natural selection. Natural selection maintains these features within an organism (thereby shaping it and producing its "design") because the feature has or once had fitness benefits (see Griskevicius and Durante 2015 for a detailed list of theories of selection).

It is important to note that evolutionary theory at ultimate levels typically cannot provide psychological explanations. This is because ultimate explanations speak solely to the function of a behavior or trait, and usually not to the underlying psychology that motivates it. Occasionally, the ultimate and proximate reason for a behavior are closely linked. Usually,

however, the connection between proximate and ultimate reasons may not be that clear. Consider why birds migrate every year. The proximate reason for bird migration is because day length shortens; the shift in day length is an immediate cue that activates a motivation to begin the bird's passage. But the ultimate reason that birds migrate is unrelated to day length. The ultimate reason behind migration is because the sites of the best food locations and the best mating places shift with the seasons (Cocker and Mabey 2005; Somveille et al. 2015).

Like other species, human beings need not consciously know the relationship between the proximate causes of their behaviors and the ultimate purpose behind those behaviors. As a matter of fact, people are especially poor at identifying the ultimate motives for their actions (Barrett and Kurzban 2006; Kenrick et al. 2010; Tooby and Cosmides 2005). A person can be consciously driven to purchase a luxurious car because its classy design makes him feel excited (a proximate reason). At the same time, he may be subconsciously driven to buy that vehicle because owning it can increase his attractiveness as a prospective mate and thereby improve his reproductive fitness (an ultimate reason) (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Sundie et al. 2011).

Once scholars formulate an ultimate explanation by considering evolutionary history or adaptive function, they can then use the explanation to test conditions that can enhance or reduce people's motivations and behaviors, as well as the evolutionary-based psychological mechanisms that prompt them (for example, the ease of attracting a partner in the case of desire for an expensive sports car). Evolutionary researchers rely on ultimate explanations to create hypotheses about psychological causal mechanisms. In the remainder of the chapter, we consider what an evolutionary-inspired investigation might look like when applied to the study of identity.

AN EVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO IDENTITY

Reed et al. (2012, p. 312) defined identity as "any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment" and stated that it invokes "a mental representation (i.e., a clear picture) of what that 'kind' of person looks like, thinks, feels, and does." People think of themselves in terms of the different groups to which they belong (for example, their family, their community) and the different roles that they play (for example, mother, mentor). Importantly, the concept of identity salience – defined by the same authors as "the salience of a particular identity within a person's self-concept" (Reed et al. 2012, p. 313) – posits that all of the identities an

individual holds within their self-concept are not always mentally accessible, but rather become accessible (that is, salient) depending on the context. This section focuses on the concept of identity salience and considers what it means to take an evolutionary approach to understanding how, why and when a particular identity influences attitudes and behaviors.

An evolutionary approach conceptualizes identity based on Tinbergen's ultimate-level explanations: evolutionary history and adaptive function. These two levels of explanations enable a consideration of modern identity and identity-driven behavior in light of the early environments of our ancestors. You might be asking yourself what environments that existed millions of years ago have to do with modern identity. Keep in mind that adaptations forged by natural selection occur slowly over time in response to pressures that compromise survival and reproduction, and current environmental conditions only recently changed from that of our ancestors. The dawn of agriculture 10,000 years ago marked the very start of what would enable and become modern mass civilizations; a time span too short to motivate vast changes in complex adaptations (Braidwood 1960). This means that modern humans exist in a world vastly different from that of our ancestors, but we still retain the same Stone Age brain architecture designed for ancestral, pre-agriculture environments – not our current environments.

In what follows, we take an evolutionary-informed look at identity by considering: (1) the evolutionary age of different identities; and (2) variation in the environment and social worlds of our ancestors during the time of human brain evolution (roughly 200,000 years ago with the emergence of modern *Homo sapiens*) (Balter 2011). Examining these evolutionary forces is important because they provide information regarding which identities may be more or less mentally accessible, whether individuals are most likely to adopt a specific identity, and how environmental conditions enhance or mute certain identity categorizations.

Evolutionary History: The Evolutionary Age of an Identity

Although extant research categorizes identities by type of referent (for a review, see Reed et al. 2012, Figure 3), identities can also be classified by whether they are fixed or malleable. Some identities are fixed, meaning that humans reliably use these identities to classify others regardless of other salient markers of in-group affiliation. Other identities are malleable, meaning that humans are more likely to erase (in other words, ignore) these identity markers in favor of another salient identity marker.

The evolutionary age of an identity refers to the amount of time an identity has existed across human history. The evolutionary age of an

identity is important because it suggests whether an identity is likely to be fixed or malleable. In illuminating this concept further, let us consider the following set of identities that differ in their tenure across human history: gender, race, health and political ideology. Our early human ancestors would have inhabited a world in which registering the sex and health of an individual enabled many useful inferences, such as whether the individual is a potential mate. An inability to identify a male from a female, or a healthy person from a diseased person, would have resulted in markedly diminished survival and reproductive potential. For instance, a person who came in contact with a sick person whom they believed to be healthy would risk catching the disease themselves and lower their likelihood of reproducing. Likewise, a male who repeatedly categorized females as males would struggle to identify mating opportunities. Thus, natural selection would have favored rapid and accurate categorization of these identities, making health and gender easily accessible identity markers.

Modern identities such as race and political ideology (for example, Democrat versus Republican in the United States) are not likely candidates for quick and unyielding categorization. When it comes to race, our ancestors would not have encountered individuals of different skin color because our ancestors would have traveled primarily by foot, rendering moves of great distance, and subsequent encounters with difference races, extremely rare (Kurzban et al. 2001). Perhaps more importantly, variation in skin color emerged later in evolutionary history (post migration out of Africa) (Jablonski 2004). Similarly, political affiliations as we distinguish them today arose in the 1800s, a mere 200 years ago (Witcover 2003). Thus, there was no strong selection pressure to accurately categorize individuals of different races and political ideologies at the time of human brain evolution. Adaptations designed specifically to categorize race and political affiliations are unlikely to exist.

This is not to say that people fail to categorize others based on race or politics. A skim of newspaper headlines suggests that people are quite good at identifying across racial and political lines. However, categorization along these lines is most likely a by-product of a cognitive mechanism designed by natural selection to identify in-group and out-group members (Gil-White 2001; Kurzban et al. 2001). A by-product is an artifact without adaptive value that persists because it is inherently coupled with an adaptation (for example, fear of poisonous snakes is an adaptation, and fear of harmless snakes is a by-product of this adaptation).

Our ancestors were unlikely to encounter individuals of different races, but they were likely to encounter individuals of different affiliations or alliances that could impact their livelihood. It was important for our ancestors to be able to identify coalition or clan members accurately

because neighboring bands frequently came into conflict with one another (McDonald et al. 2012; Moffett 2013). Thus, the quicker our ancestors could identify an approaching individual as within or outside of their coalition, the more likely they were to survive. Successfully navigating one's social world would thus involve correctly identifying individuals who posed a threat, not just between, but also within groups (Chagnon 1992). For example, people competed with members of their own group for leadership positions that enhanced status and access to resources within the group (Maner and Mead 2010).

Because alliances and markers of social categories tended to shift and were not static, our ancestors had to regularly track and adjust for shifts in alliances. Ethnographically well-known examples of coalition markers include dress, language, gait, behavior and coalitional badges, and our ancestors relied on these markers, dependent on whether they were accurate signals of group membership in a given time period and environment (Berger and Heath 2007; Berger and Rand 2008; Callahan and Ledgerwood 2016; Moffett 2013; Stevenage et al. 1999). Thus, although natural selection shaped humans to search for cues that signal coalition membership, the specific cues that humans use to categorize coalition membership appear to be flexible. In our modern world, the human brain uses racial cues to categorize in-group versus out-group membership (in other words, who is a friend versus foe), but human reliance on race as an indicator for group membership can be easily erased and replaced with a new marker of in-group affiliation.

Supporting this idea, research in the evolutionary tradition has found that perceivers automatically attend to and encode evolutionarily ancient social identity categories in a fast and fixed pattern because of hardwired (adaptive) neurocognitive mechanisms (Gil-White 2001; Ito and Urland 2003; Kurzban et al. 2001). For example, humans appear to have a neurocognitive mechanism designed to detect biological sex (whether an individual is male or female) that is difficult to override; the same is not true for race (Kurzban et al. 2001; Pietraszewski et al. 2014). Although both sex and race are encoded quickly (Ito and Urland 2003), only racial encoding can be overridden. When people attune toward alternative cues to coalitional affiliation unrelated to race (such as team membership demarcated by an athletic jersey), they cease to categorize along racial lines (Cosmides et al. 2003; Kurzban et al. 2001). For example, a person who encounters an African American man in a grocery store would likely recall the man in terms of his race and gender. However, the individual may classify the same man encountered at a sporting event as an athlete, be less likely to recall his race, yet equally as likely to classify him as male. This lends support to the idea that there is likely no human cognitive architec-

ture designed specifically to encode race; a trait that is evolutionarily more recent. Rather, the automatic encoding of race (as well as political affiliation) is likely a by-product of adaptations that evolved for the alternative function of detecting coalitions and alliances.

Implications for identity salience

If evolutionarily ancient social identities are more difficult to erase, this may have important implications for the salience of identities such as sex, age or health that are non-conforming (for example, a person who does not identify with their biological sex). Since observers are strongly sensitive to cues that suggest one's membership in these categories, an individual who possesses cues to these identity categories, but does not conform to them, must overwhelm the categorization system in order to be identified correctly. This would be true for individuals who are older but identify as young, female but identify as male, or disabled but identify as healthy (for example, a Special Olympics athlete).

Let us consider this proposition more closely. Take, for instance, an individual who is gender non-conforming, such as a trans woman (that is, a person biologically male who identifies as female). Individuals like herself are fighting against an ancient categorization system – gender – that is inflexible and quick. Her identity as a female is likely to be constantly salient in her mind to help her monitor how her behavior aligns with her intended signal. Thus, a trans woman may be more cognizant as to how engaging in activities such as contact sports or cooking classes affirms or challenges her identity as a female.

Conversely, for an individual who is gender conforming, such as a cisgender woman (that is, a person biologically female who also identifies as female), the salience of a female identity is likely to be weaker in comparison to a trans woman. Since human brains readily identify and process sex cues (for example, facial shape, waist-to-hip ratio or breasts) (Jasienska et al. 2004; Oh et al. 2012; Redouté et al. 2000), a cisgender woman would likely be less cognizant of her gender identity. Regardless of whether she is playing contact sports or taking cooking classes, others are likely to classify her as female. In sum, the salience of identities that do not conform to one's biology is likely stronger.

Predictions for identity-related consumer behavior

From an evolutionary theoretical perspective, consumers counter-signaling an ancient social identity may align more strongly with that identity (that is, have a strong identity salience) to facilitate accurate categorization. This may impact how they respond to brands and various marketing tactics. Compared to cisgender women, trans women may exhibit stronger loyalty

toward and willingness to pay for products from brands that are undeniably feminine, such as L'Oréal Paris. This may also translate into less brand loyalty when brands signal that they are unlikely to assist the consumer in meeting signaling desires. For instance, in 2016, CoverGirl hired male spokesmodel James Charles to represent its products (Jones 2016). Rather than expanding sales reach to include the trans community, CoverGirl's use of a male representing its products may have the reverse effect. A male spokesperson could lead trans women – and quite possibly some cisgender women – to perceive that CoverGirl's products cannot effectively enhance femininity and challenge the ancient categorization mechanisms that others use to assess gender and attractiveness.

The Adaptive Function of Identity: Adaptations to Early Life Environments

One theory of natural selection that can enlighten our understanding of identity is life history theory (Kaplan and Gangestad 2005; Roff 2002; Stearns 1992). Life history theory is a theory of adaptive individual differences. The theory posits that people possess adaptations that crystalize certain individual differences in behavior based on one's early life environment (Ellis et al. 2009; Griskevicius et al. 2013). While research has shown that an individual's childhood environment is an adaptive critical period for acquiring a language, an individual's childhood environment is also an adaptive critical period for calibrating a life history strategy (Belsky et al. 2012; Simpson et al. 2011).

Life history strategies vary on a fast–slow continuum, with some individuals following faster strategies and others following slower strategies (Griskevicius et al. 2011a). A slow life history strategy involves delayed maturation and a focus on long-term planning. Individuals who experience childhood environments that are safer, stable, and predictable (for example, higher socio-economic environments) develop an expectation that their future environments are also likely to be stable, which calibrates them toward a slower strategy. A slow strategy is adaptive in these environments because an individual can reliably plan for the future. A fast life history strategy, on the other hand, involves accelerated maturation and less long-term planning. Individuals who experience a resource-deprived childhood environment (for example, lower socio-economic environments) expect their future environments to be harsh and unpredictable, which calibrates them toward a faster strategy. A fast strategy is adaptive in such constantly fluctuating environments because it is difficult to anticipate what the future will bring or even if it will come at all (Griskevicius et al. 2011a).

Fast strategists tend to expedite mating effort, as indicated by early initiation of sexual behavior and more sexual partners. By contrast, slow

strategists tend to inhibit mating effort, as indicated by later initiation of sexual behavior, fewer sexual partners, and preference for monogamous relationships (Belsky et al. 2012; Griskevicius et al. 2011a). People's childhood environments also affect their self-control. Whereas fast strategists are often short-term opportunists with lower self-control and a strong desire for instant benefits, slow strategists tend to possess a long-term perspective with higher self-control and a desire for increased future pay-offs at the expense of immediate gratification (Griskevicius et al. 2011b; Griskevicius et al. 2013; Hill et al. 2016). In a predictable environment, it is often beneficial to delay immediate gratification for a larger outcome that will be available in the future. However, when the environment is unpredictable, it is difficult to forecast whether opportunities will be available in the future. Thus, it is advantageous to seize opportunities as they come. Note that this concept of how life history strategies relate to self-control differs from other theories of self-control. For instance, Bartels and Urminsky (2011) posit that whether a person decides to exert self-control depends in part on the perceived discrepancy between who they are now and who they will be in the future. Life history strategies, however, posit that a person's self-control depends on their perception of their future environment, not their perception of their future self.

Implications for identity salience

A person's fast or slow life history strategy may influence which identity is more likely to be salient. For example, fast strategists – those sensitized to navigate a harsh and unpredictable world – take more risks and are open to new experiences (Griskevicius et al. 2011b; Griskevicius et al. 2013; Kim et al. 2018). Thus, when it comes to identity, individuals who grow up in harsh and unpredictable environments (a fast strategist) may align with identities considered rebellious, eccentric or novel. They may also be more likely to endorse bizarre beliefs and fringe ideas (Miller 2009; Nettle 2006). Likewise, they may consider themselves liberal and cosmopolitan (Grinstein and Wathieu 2012; Thornhill and Fincher 2007). Slow strategists, on the other hand, are more conservative. A person who grew up in a safe, predictable environment (a slow strategist) may align with identities considered normative, traditional and cautious. Unlike fast strategists, slow strategists may be more likely to regard themselves as conservative and communal (Nettle 2006; Simpson et al. 2011).

Predictions for identity-related consumer behavior

The divergence of identity between those sensitized to a fast versus slow strategy may translate into predictable consumer behaviors. If fast strategists have a taste for risk and novelty, this would translate into consumer

choices that align with such traits (Miller 2009). For example, fast strategists would be more likely to be early adopter consumers and prefer brands or products that are not mainstream, such as movies by Quentin Tarantino and music by Wu-Tang Clan. They would be more likely to have tattoos and piercings, enjoy extreme sports, attend grunge music festivals, travel to foreign lands and use drugs. They may also be more likely to endorse astrology and other religions, and steer away from high maintenance products and pets.

Slow strategists tend to be more conservative and long-term focused. Thus, slow strategist consumers would likely be late adopter consumers. They may thus prefer safer, predictable consumer choices, such as cars by Buick, movies by Ron Howard, and music by Billy Joel. They would most likely prefer clothing by brands such as Tommy Bahama and Ralph Lauren, and enjoy mainstream sports such as golf or baseball. Unlike fast strategists, they are long-term planners. Thus, they may be drawn to high-maintenance or fragile products that require care, and be more likely to own a pet (Miller 2009).

The Adaptive Function of Identity: Adaptations for Group Living

Humans are social animals. All living humans are descendants of hunter-gather ancestors who lived in roving bands of 50–150 individuals (Buss 2012). Because predators, disease and access to valued resources were recurrent problems for our ancestors, cooperating with others in a group-living context helped to solve those problems (Alexander 1974). People depended on each other for protection, assistance and trade. Perhaps not surprisingly, then, people have come to value their social identity (for example, roles, reputation) within a group.

The value people place on their social identity relates to the costs associated with negative perceptions from others in the group (Kurzban and Leary 2001). Social exclusion – and thus loss of protection and resources from the group – is a valid concern given that group members were continuously trying to manage their own vulnerability to interpersonal violence, theft and infectious disease; a critical down-side of group living. Because interdependence makes cooperators susceptible to disease, free-riding and other forms of cheating, these threats imposed selection pressures that shaped the evolution of person perception. People who successfully and reliably identified others who posed fitness-relevant threats, and responded in ways that minimized those threats, were more likely to survive and reproduce (Moffett 2013; Schaller and Park 2011). The result is that people are highly motivated to correctly identify who they can cooperate with and who they should avoid. Thus, shifts in environmental conditions can influ-

ence the prejudice, discrimination and stigmatization of social identities (Neuberg and Schaller 2016).

Environmental conditions that alter prejudice and stigmatization include disease prevalence and resource scarcity (Krosch and Amodio 2014; Neuberg and Schaller 2016; Schaller and Park 2011). For example, when disease prevalence is high (as would be the case when news breaks of food and airborne illness), people are more prejudiced against others who are obese or disabled (Park et al. 2003; Park et al. 2007). Although obese and disabled people are no more or less likely to carry infectious disease, the neurocognitive mechanisms designed to identify cues of infectious disease become overly sensitive and (incorrectly) categorizes disability, obesity and age as linked to risk of pathogen transmission. As a result, disease prevalence or an individual's perception of their own vulnerability to disease enhances discriminatory behavior toward people who have a disability or are obese (Schaller and Park 2011).

Similarly, scarcity increases racial prejudice (Butz and Yogeeswaran 2011; Krosch and Amodio 2014; Rodeheffer et al. 2012). When resources are scarce, people are motivated to limit their sharing to in-group members. Functionally biased perceptual and cognitive mechanisms for categorizing in-group versus out-group identities are likely to accompany these behaviors. For example, white perceivers primed with resource scarcity were especially likely to categorize mixed-race targets as black (rather than white), to "see" African Americans as more "stereotypically Black," and to allocate fewer resources to them (Krosch and Amodio 2014). Economic abundance, on the other hand, lessened racial tension and discriminatory behavior.

Implications for identity salience

Variation in local environmental conditions should influence identity salience in predictable ways. For instance, people should experience an enhanced desire to be socially categorized as healthy or an athlete (which symbolizes superior health) when disease prevalence is salient. This should be particularly important for people who are older, overweight or disabled, because observers are more likely to categorize them as unhealthy during periods of heightened health salience. These individuals may be more aware that they are not signaling superior health and therefore more likely to adopt products that suggest that they are healthy individuals.

In line with this, people should hold stronger in-group identity salience during tough times. This may be particularly true for individuals who are not easily categorized into the majority on a particular trait or characteristic. For example, a Hispanic American may be more likely than a white American to showcase their United States (US) citizenship after a terrorist

attack on US soil. In this case, news of the attack would heighten the salience of their identity as an American, and since Hispanic Americans are less of a stereotypical exemplar of an American (compared to a white American), a Hispanic individual may experience an increase in attitudes, preferences or behaviors that align with an American identity.

Predictions for identity-related consumer behavior

Identity shifts in response to evolutionarily relevant variation in environmental contexts should lead to predictable shifts in consumer behavior. For instance, disease prevalence should increase salience of consumers' health-related identities (for example, "I am a health-conscious individual"). Since age is a symbol of one's health (Yashin et al. 2007), consumers may also be more likely to hold salient perceptions of themselves as young individuals. This shift in identity salience is likely to impact product preferences. Due to this heightened salience of health-related identities, disease prevalence may increase desires to purchase products from companies that advertise with messages of health consciousness, such as products that promote a message of finding an inner athlete.

Scarcity in environmental resources should lead to support for products and organizations that promote one's own in-group. This may translate into increased support for local brands (for example, domestic versus foreign) or a stronger desire to signal in-group identity through clothing and other insignias. Conversely, people may experience a more relaxed in-group identity salience when environmental resources are high. In this case, people may find themselves less supportive of local brands and – in comparison to periods of resource scarcity – feeling a lower desire to showcase their group-referent identity through their product choices.

CONCLUSION

An evolutionary-theoretical perspective considers the evolutionary history and adaptive function of behavior. This chapter illustrated some of the ways an evolutionary-informed view of identity can lead to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how our evolved tendencies contribute to modern-day identity. In doing so, we considered how the evolutionary age of identities, adaptations to early life environments and adaptations for group living are likely to play a role in determining which identities individuals find most cognitively accessible, which may have profound influence on consumer behavior.

Charles Darwin (1859, p.488) said, "In the distant future I see open fields for far more important researches. Psychology will be based on a

new foundation.” It has been more than 150 years, but Darwin’s prophecy is starting to actualize. The connection between the social and natural sciences has become clearer. With this, current and future generations of scholars are geared to push the envelope of innovation, incorporate ultimate-level thinking, and deepen the field’s understanding of identity and why and how identity impacts consumer motivation and behavior.

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4. How signaling motives and identity salience influence luxury consumption

Keith Wilcox

LUXURY CONSUMPTION

There are several definitions of luxury and many different perspectives on what is a luxury product. Although discussing each one is beyond the scope of this chapter, it is necessary to provide a general perspective in order to understand how the consumption of luxury products is related to identity. The term “luxury” originates from the Latin word *luxus*, meaning “excess,” so luxury was initially associated with unrestrained behavior (Quito 2017). Over time, however, the meaning evolved to refer to “soft or extravagant living, indulgence, sumptuousness or opulence” (Glare 1992). Thus, researchers frequently define luxury products as those that provide consumers with intense emotions and high quality, at a price that far exceeds their functional value (Kapferer 2015). Inherent in this perspective is the notion that intangible benefits comprise a significant portion of the value of luxury products.

Much of the intangible value of luxury products is due to the symbolic meaning derived from their consumption. Because of their high price, luxury products are exclusive, since they are primarily consumed by the few who have the means to afford them. Thus, they are associated with identity-related concepts such as prestige, dominance, power and status (Griskevicius et al. 2007; Rucker and Galinsky 2008; Torelli et al. 2011; Veblen 1899/1992). Consequently, people consume luxury (and counterfeit) products to construct and communicate a positive self-identity (Belk 1988; Perez et al. 2010; Wilcox et al. 2009). Thus, while consumers do buy luxury products for their high quality, they also consume them because of what these products symbolize about themselves; identity motives have a significant influence on consumers’ decision to purchase luxury products.

IDENTITY AND LUXURY CONSUMPTION

Individuals hold different mental representations of the self that form their view of who they are (Brewer 1991). Broadly, these different aspects

of identity can be conceptualized as category labels to which consumers self-associate either by choice or by endowment (Reed et al. 2012). These category labels comprise a mental representation of what that “kind” of person is like, and they can be objective (for example, mother, woman, African American) or subjective (for example, high status, Republican, professor) in nature.

As discussed in other chapters in this book, the identity salience principle indicates that identity can have a significant influence on consumers’ attitudes, judgment and behavior. In particular, research has shown that when specific aspects of identity are temporarily activated, consumers respond more positively to marketing communications and other stimuli (for example, spokespeople) that are consistent with this identity (Forehand et al. 2002). For instance, consumers respond differently to gender-based appeals when their gender identity is salient (Tybout and Yalch 1980). Similarly, when ethnic identity is primed, Asians respond more favorably to Asian spokespeople than Caucasians (Forehand et al. 2002). Thus, identity salience refers to situations when a particular identity within a person’s self-concept becomes salient, and this increases the likelihood that the identity will influence the person’s attitudes and behavior (Reed et al. 2012).

Thus, it is not surprising that luxury firms frequently attempt to create desire for their products by appealing to different aspects of consumers’ identity. For instance, Mercedes-Benz ran an advertisement appealing to men by highlighting that “women talk about men in sports cars.” In contrast, Audi ran an advertisement appealing to the more individualized aspect of identity by emphasizing that the car is “as unique as you.” These attempts to persuade consumers are assumed to be effective because they link the product to consumers’ identity. Thus, if a relevant identity is salient during a purchasing decision, consumers should be more likely to buy the product. Therefore, identity salience is likely to have a significant impact on luxury consumption.

However, as mentioned, identity motives also play a central role in consumers’ decision to buy luxury products. These motives are likely to be integrated into individuals’ mental representations of different aspects of their identity. Thus, when social or contextual factors make a specific aspect of a consumer’s identity salient, an identity motive that is associated with this aspect of identity may also become activated, which should influence their luxury consumption behavior. Thus, to fully understand how identity salience influences luxury consumption, it is necessary to both comprehend how identity motives shape luxury consumption and identify which motives are associated with different aspects of consumers’ identity.

IDENTITY-SIGNALING, IDENTITY SALIENCE AND LUXURY CONSUMPTION

Identity Signaling

Of the numerous identity motives that may influence consumers' decision to purchase luxury products, identity-signaling likely has the strongest influence. A significant amount of research has shown that people often conspicuously consume luxury products to communicate a desirable identity to others (Drèze and Nunes 2009; Griskevicius et al. 2007; Mandel et al. 2006; Rucker and Galinski 2008). For instance, a person wearing a shirt with a luxury brand logo may do so in order to signal to others their personality or that they possess status. Regardless of the motivation underlying the signal, people make inferences about the identity of the signaler, which can influence how they evaluate and respond to the signaler. For instance, research finds that when people consume products with conspicuous logos by high-end designer brands, others treat them in a preferential manner and bestow them with other social benefits (Nelissen and Meijers 2011).

However, identity-signaling can be considered a broad category of motives that each involve engaging in a behavior based on the belief that the behavior will convey identity information to others (for a review, see Gal 2015). These different identity-signaling motives have been shown to not only increase consumers' desire for luxury products, but also influence the types of luxury products they consume. Moreover, research suggests that specific motives may be closely associated with distinct aspects of consumers' identity. Next, I discuss how these distinct identity-signaling motives influence luxury consumption and how they are related to aspects of consumers' identity.

Signaling Motives and Identity Salience

Although there many different identity-signaling motives, this chapter focuses on five motives that have been shown to influence luxury consumption: compensatory consumption, communicating cultural capital, mating, self-expression and differentiation (see Table 4.1 for a summary). In doing so, I suggest ways in which identity salience should influence luxury consumption.

Compensatory consumption

A significant amount of research has demonstrated that the desire to signal status is an important reason why consumers purchase luxury

Table 4.1 How signaling motives influence luxury consumption and the potential influence of identity salience

Signaling motive	Effect on luxury consumption	Influence of identity salience
Compensatory consumption	Increased preference for conspicuous luxury products	Strongest when identities associated with low status are salient
Communicating cultural capital	Increased preference for inconspicuous luxury products	Strongest when identities associated with possessing cultural capital are salient
Mating	Increased preference for conspicuous luxury products	Strongest when gender identity is salient
Self-expression	Increased preference for luxury products and brands that reflect one's personality; Increased (reduced) preference for counterfeit luxury products when individual hold favorable (unfavorable) attitudes towards counterfeiting	Strongest when identities associated with personality and values are salient
Differentiation	Decreased preference for popular luxury brands; Increased preference for luxury products with unique features (e.g., colors)	Strongest when individualized aspects of identity are salient

products (Drèze and Nunes 2009; Griskevicius et al. 2007; Rucker and Galinski 2008). Consequently, people often conspicuously consume luxury products to communicate that they possess status to others. The desire to signal status has also been shown to play a significant role in the decision to buy counterfeit luxury products, because these products allow consumers to signal status but at a price point that most can afford (Wilcox et al. 2009).

Research suggests that a person's social status may be an important predictor of their desire to signal status to others. In the United States, African Americans and Hispanics have been shown to spend a much larger share of their income on conspicuous luxury products (for example, jewelry, watches, cars) than Caucasians, while spending less of their income on important categories, such as healthcare (Charles et al. 2009). These

differences in spending patterns are thought to be due to the association between race and social status. Because African Americans and Hispanics tend to have lower incomes, they are perceived to be low in social status in the absence of other indicators of status. Thus, African Americans and Hispanics compensate by conspicuously consuming luxury products in order to communicate that they possess status, a process that is often referred to as compensatory consumption (Rucker and Galinsky 2008).

Importantly, consumers do not need to be part of a low-status group for them to engage in compensatory consumption. When this aspect of identity is momentarily threatened, consumers are more likely to buy conspicuous luxury products in order to restore a positive self-concept. For instance, Rucker and Galinsky (2008) found that priming a state of low power, which is associated with status, in college students at an elite university made them more willing to spend money on conspicuous luxury products in order to restore their sense of power. Thus, when social or contextual factors make a person feel that they do not possess status, either directly or by making this aspect of their identity salient, this should increase their desire for conspicuous luxury products.

Communicating cultural capital

While status signaling plays a significant role in the decision to purchase luxury products, individuals are also motivated to consume luxury products to communicate their cultural capital to others. Cultural capital is defined as social assets, such as cultural knowledge, that a person has in a specific domain (Bourdieu and Passeron 1973). Although cultural capital can be a source of status, the signaling of cultural capital is more focused on communicating to select in-group members that one has insider knowledge that out-group members do not possess (Berger and Ward 2010). When individuals seek to signal their cultural capital to in-group members, they prefer to do so inconspicuously, which can impact the type of luxury products they consume (Han et al. 2010).

Luxury products vary in the extent to which the logo or identity of the brand is conspicuously displayed. For instance, Gucci makes several products where the brand's "double G" logo and iconic green and red stripe are integral design elements. These elements serve as conspicuous signals because the brand elements are highly visible, making it easy for most people to recognize that a person is wearing a Gucci product. The company also makes several products where the logo and other brand elements are displayed much less prominently. Such products are inconspicuous signals because only those with insider knowledge or cultural capital, such as the ultra-rich (Han et al. 2010), will be able to recognize that the product is by Gucci. Consequently, when individuals want to communicate

that they possess cultural capital, they tend to consume luxury products with inconspicuous brand elements since only those “in the know” will recognize the signal.

While it has not been explicitly tested, these findings suggest that when an aspect of identity that is associated with possessing cultural capital is salient, consumers should be more likely to purchase inconspicuous luxury products in order to quietly signal to other in-group members. For example, fashion students have cultural capital in the fashion domain because of their expertise on the subject (Berger and Ward 2010). Thus, priming a male fashion student’s school identity should make him more likely to purchase luxury products with small logos compared to priming his gender identity. Moreover, priming individuals with cues of wealth and status, may shift their preference toward inconspicuous luxury products.

Mating

Another aspect of identity that has been shown to be associated with luxury consumption is gender. Most research investigating how gender influences luxury consumption has primarily looked at the relationship through the lens of evolutionary psychology (Durante et al. 2014; Griskevicius et al. 2007; Janssens et al. 2011; Sundie et al. 2011). This research argues that much of human behavior is driven by the desire to mate. Consumers fulfil this goal by selecting products that indicate that they have desirable traits in order to attract partners. Thus, people often consume luxury products to elicit favorable responses from members of the opposite sex in order to fulfil their mating goals. For instance, when mating goals are made accessible in men, they display an increased willingness to spend money on conspicuous luxury products because the consumption of these products signals that they possess desirable traits to women (Griskevicius et al. 2007). Mating goals can also induce women to purchase luxury products, but the underlying reason is not to attract men, but to deter other women from their partners (Wang and Griskevicius 2013). Thus, when women are primed to guard their mate, they are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption.

Although I am not aware of any research directly examining how gender identity salience influences luxury consumption, if these different mating motives have been integrated into consumers’ gender identity then making their gender identity salient should increase their desire to engage in conspicuous consumption. Indirect support for this prediction comes from research demonstrating that administering testosterone increases men’s preference for status brands (Nave et al. 2018). Another way that gender identity salience could influence luxury consumption is by increasing consumers’ preference for luxury products that are associated with

their gender. For instance, luxury sports cars (for example, Porsches) are mostly driven by men, so they are associated with a male identity (Dunn and Searle 2010). Thus, activating a male's gender identity should increase his preference for luxury sports cars because he sees it to be similar to his identity. Indeed, research finds that men's testosterone levels increase after driving expensive sports cars (Saad and Vongas 2009). Similarly, making a female's gender identity salient should increase her preference for luxury brands that are primarily consumed by women (for example, Chanel).

Self-expression

People are often motivated to consume luxury products in order to express their identity to others (Wilcox et al. 2009). When individuals are motivated to purchase luxury products for self-expressive concerns, they do so in order to communicate their values, interests and personality to others. For instance, someone who is motivated by self-expression may purchase a luxury brand because the brand's image or personality reflects the kind of person they perceive themselves to be. It is likely because of this that luxury branding strategies often focus on creating a unique brand identity (Kapferer 2015). The desire to express one's values may also be one reason why Millennial consumers are increasingly demanding that luxury brands become more socially responsible (Oakes 2018); these consumers are likely conflicted by their desire to purchase luxury brands while wanting to act in a socially responsible manner. They overcome this conflict by purchasing brands that are consistent with their values. Thus, making aspects of identity that are closely associated with being a Millennial should increase their preference for luxury products that reflect their values.

Self-expression has also been shown to effect the decision to purchase counterfeit luxury products. Research finds that when consumers are motivated to purchase luxury products as a form of self-expression, their decision to purchase counterfeit luxury products is contingent on their underlying values (Wilcox et al. 2009). For instance, low self-monitors, who tend to be more concerned about purchasing products that express their values, are less likely to purchase counterfeit luxury products than high self-monitors, who are more concerned about signaling status. However, this does not mean that low self-monitors avoid purchasing counterfeit luxury products. They do so when these products are consistent with their values. If low self-monitors perceive counterfeiting to be immoral, they are less likely to purchase counterfeit luxury products. However, when they have more favorable attitudes towards counterfeiting, they are more likely to purchase counterfeits. This suggests that when factors make aspects of identity associated with one's values salient this should increase (decrease)

consumers' desire for counterfeit luxury products if they hold positive (negative) attitudes towards counterfeiting.

Differentiation

Another motive that has a significant impact on luxury consumption is the desire to differentiate oneself from others. When individuals are motivated to differentiate themselves, they tend to reject products and styles that are adopted by the majority of consumers in consumption domains that are symbolic of identity (Berger and Heath 2007), such as luxury products. Moreover, when individuals do purchase products or brands that are adopted by the majority, the desire to differentiate oneself from others leads them to choose identity-related product features (for example, unique colors) that will distinguish them from others (Chan et al. 2012).

While some researchers argue that this motive is related to social categories (Chan et al. 2012), differentiation is a motive that appears to be more closely associated with more individualized aspects of identity, such as seeing oneself as a unique person. Thus, when factors make more individualized aspects of identity salient, people should be more likely to consume luxury products that diverge from the mainstream. This should increase their desire for luxury brands that are scarce or considered niche. It may also increase their preference for products by well-known brands that have uncommon features or are unique in some way. This may be one reason for the popularity of collaborations between well-known luxury brands and non-luxury brands that are untraditional (Milnes 2018). These co-designed products may still be viewed as a luxury product, but the design elements are unique from others in the category, which allows consumers of these products to differentiate themselves from other luxury consumers.

LUXURY CONSUMPTION, IDENTITY SALIENCE AND BEHAVIOR

The focus of this chapter has been on how salient aspects of identity can influence luxury consumption. However, according to the research on self-signaling (Bodner and Prelec 2003), the consumption of luxury products may also make aspects of identity salient. Self-signaling can be viewed as part of a set of general propositions (for example, self-perception theory; Bem 1972) suggesting that people do not have a perfect sense of themselves and therefore infer the kind of person they are from observing their behavior and the situations in which their behavior occurs. These self-attributions shape consumers' identity independently from their underlying reason for engaging in the behavior or whether they actually

possess that identity. Thus, several studies in marketing have demonstrated that how consumers feel about themselves and their perception of their own characteristics are influenced by the decisions they make and the products they consume (Khan and Dhar 2006; Rucker and Galinsky 2008). This suggests that when people consume luxury products the consumption experience may make aspects of their identity salient, which according to the identity salience principle should influence their subsequent attitudes and behavior.

Consistent with this idea, research finds that wearing clothing can lead people to act in a manner that is consistent with the symbolic meaning of the clothes. For instance, when individuals wear a lab coat that is described as a doctor's coat they display greater sustained attention on tasks compared to those who wear a lab coat described as a painter's coat (Adam and Galinsky 2012). Similarly, wearing large hoods makes people more likely to administer shocks to others (Zimbardo 1969), but wearing a nurse's uniform makes people less likely to administer shocks (Johnson and Downing 1979). This suggests that if the symbolic meaning associated with luxury consumption makes salient a particular aspect of a consumers' identity, it will elicit behavior that is consistent with that identity.

Indirect evidence for this prediction comes from research on counterfeit consumption. Although people often buy counterfeit products to signal positive traits, Gino et al. (2010) found that actually wearing counterfeit products leads to undesirable behavior. In this research, participants wore purportedly counterfeit or genuine sunglasses while doing unrelated tasks where they were given the option to cheat. They found that those who wore counterfeit sunglasses were more likely to cheat compared to those who wore genuine sunglasses, because wearing the counterfeit sunglasses made participants feel inauthentic. Thus, the consumption of counterfeit products appeared to make an undesirable aspect of consumers' moral identity salient.

Although there are several aspects of identity that can be made salient by the consumption luxury products, perhaps the most salient aspect would be social status. Thus, the consumption of luxury products should lead consumers to feel that they possess social status, which may influence their subsequent behavior. Consistent with this perspective, research finds that the consumption of luxury products can result in feelings of pride (McFerran et al. 2014), which is associated with status (Griskevicius et al. 2010). Moreover, research finds that when individuals imagine themselves wearing a luxury product, they are more likely to behave in a manner that is associated with status, such as by donating money to charity and purchasing products that are associated with socially responsible causes (Wilcox et al. 2018).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to examine how identity salience influences luxury consumption. In doing so, I focused on identity salience and the role of identity-signaling motives in luxury consumption. I identified five identity-signaling motives (compensatory consumption, communicating cultural capital, mating, self-expression and differentiation) that have been shown to influence luxury consumption. I proposed that these identity-signaling motives are integrated into consumers' mental representations of different aspects of their identity (for example, social class and gender). Thus, when these aspects of identity are made salient this should increase consumers' desire for luxury products and influence the type of luxury products (conspicuous or inconspicuous) that they consume; a pattern of behavior that is consistent with the identity salience principle. I also discussed how the consumption of luxury products can make aspects of identity salient to influence behavior.

As the review of past research suggests, several outstanding questions remain on the relationship between identity salience and luxury consumption. One important issue that has yet to be addressed is to understand when luxury firms should focus their efforts on linking their products to aspects of consumers' identity or focus on connecting their products to the identity-signaling motive that encourages luxury consumption. While past research on the identity salience principle suggests that firms should focus on making their products more consistent with salient identities, there are times when a salient identity that is inconsistent with luxury consumption (for example, low social status) can increase consumers' desire for luxury products. Thus, researchers may want to examine whether priming the motives or the identity is more effective at influencing luxury consumption. It is likely that when primed motives are consistent with salient identities this may exert a powerful influence on consumers' desire for luxury brands. However, it is also possible that when an active identity is inconsistent with a primed motive this could lead consumers to inhibit the motive, which may decrease their desire for luxury products (see Laran, Chapter 2 in this volume, for additional discussion on the co-activation of motives and identity). Future research is also necessary to better understand how luxury consumption influences identity salience and the implications of this on consumers' subsequent decisions to purchase luxury products. It is possible that when different aspects of identity are made salient by luxury consumption, this could increase or decrease consumers' desire for luxury products.

To summarize, past research and the arguments developed in this chapter suggest that identity salience plays a pivotal role in luxury

consumption. Identity salience can make consumers more responsive to marketing communications and product positioning strategies. Identity salience may also motivate consumers to purchase luxury products by heightening identity-signaling motives that shape luxury consumption. However, as has been shown, the relationship between identity salience, identity-signaling motives and luxury consumption is complex. Consequently, future research is necessary to better understand these relationships, as doing so should allow managers to better position their products and design more effective marketing communication.

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5. The role of identity salience in creative thinking

Ravi Mehta, Lidan Xu and Darren W. Dahl

INTRODUCTION

Creativity, a cognitive process that leads to the generation of an outcome that is both novel and appropriate to the task at hand (Amabile 1983; Moreau and Dahl 2005), is not only fundamental to problem-solving, but also serves as a channel for self-expression. In cave paintings and art galleries, beautiful stone tools and incredible product designs, rhythmical drum beats and party playlists, creativity not only enables the creation of new and better solutions (Burroughs and Glen Mick 2004), but also allows individuals to leave their thumbprints on the final product.

Fundamentally, creative cognition entails accessing and recombining existing knowledge sets that may initially seem unrelated or irrelevant to one another (Guilford 1950; Rietzschel et al. 2007; Smith et al. 1995). Such knowledge systems, which can involve personal attributes, thought processes, feelings and behaviors, form an integral part of an individual's identity (Cheng et al. 2008). Thus, different aspects of one's identity can activate diverse knowledge sets, thereby paving the way for creativity to emerge (Higgins 1996). Note that identity refers to the concepts related to the attributes and fundamental elements of who the person is (Baumeister 1997) or, more specifically, "any category label with which a consumer self-associates that is amenable to a clear picture of what a person in that category looks like, thinks, feels, and does" (Reed et al. 2012, p. 310). Importantly, Reed et al. (2012) highlight that identity salience increases the probability that a specific identity within a person's self-concept will influence their subsequent attitudes and behaviors.

Indeed, previous research has examined how and why the salience of different aspects of one's identity can affect creative cognition and behavior. Most recently, researchers have extended a specific effort to define the creative identity construct and illuminate its influence on behavior in general and creativity in particular. Creative identity, referred to as the overall importance a person places on being creative as part of their self-concept (Vincent and Goncalo 2014; Jaussi et al. 2007), has been studied not only through the examination of its antecedents and consequences

(Farmer et al. 2003; Hirst et al. 2009), but also as a construct: what it means and how it develops over time (Barbot and Heuser 2017; Jaussi et al. 2007). In addition to the original research on the subject, recent book chapters and literature review articles have also discussed creative identity (Barbot and Heuser 2017; Batey and Hughes 2017; de Valverde et al. 2017; Dollinger and Dollinger 2017; Gauntlett 2007; Glaveanu 2017; Lebuda and Csikszentmihalyi 2017; Silvia et al. 2017; Taylor and Littleton 2016; Vincent and Goncalo 2014).

While recent efforts to define creative identity are commendable, creative identity is but one part of a person's overall personality configuration and can be viewed as a subdomain in the overall identity literature (Dollinger et al. 2004). Researchers have examined a myriad of other components of identity that have implications for creativity. However, such work appears to be fragmented. Indeed, the current state of the literature lacks a comprehensive framework that integrates different aspects of identity together and fails to delineate how they can present implications for creative cognition and behavior. This chapter, thus, aims to offer a parsimonious framework to tie together a diverse body of literature and establish a better understanding of how and why one's identity can influence creativity.

Specifically, we organize our discussion around the theoretical framework put forth by Reed et al. (2012). The authors identify three factors that together offer a comprehensive way to model the salience of various aspects of one's identity: (1) chronic disposition; (2) the individual's environment; and (3) stimulus cues. These factors in turn can have implications for consumer behavior in general and creativity in particular. We end the chapter with additional discussion of topics that we believe present opportunities for future research that will continue to advance our understanding of the relationship between identity and creativity.

CHRONIC DISPOSITION

A vast amount of research has examined various aspects of one's chronic disposition (that is, personality traits and cognitive orientations) in terms of their impact on creative performance and behavior. A general overview of the literature suggests that both the tendency to question existing norms and the openness to new ideas can lead to higher creativity. Individuals whose identity revolves around a need to be unique among others and/or a desire to challenge the status quo tend to display higher creativity (Dollinger 2003; Feist 1998). Indeed, research has revealed that creativity is positively correlated with being autonomous and non-conforming (Barron 1957; MacKinnon 1962; Anastasi and Schaefer 1969). Such individuals

typically focus their attention and energies inward and are often characterized by higher intrinsic motivation, which in turn has been consistently demonstrated to enhance creativity (Amabile 1996; Moneta and Siu 2002).

Similarly, a cognitive style of openness relates to a flexible thought process that enables a person to avoid being tied to one perspective and thereby leads to higher creativity (McCrae 1987). Relatedly, high integrative complexity (that is, an information-processing capacity that involves considering and combining multiple perspectives) (Streufert and Nogami 1989; Suedfeld and Tetlock 1992), low functional fixedness (that is, a cognitive bias that limits a person to using an object in a typical manner) (Duncker 1945; Mehta and Zhu 2016), or high cognitive flexibility (that is, mental ability to simultaneously think about and fluently switch between multiple concepts) (Scott 1962; Murray et al. 1990), have all been proven to increase creative performance.

In contrast, chronic dispositions that encourage conformity diminish creativity. For example, people with high authoritarian personalities who tend to depend on social conventions and norms (Adorno et al. 1950; Altemeyer 1988, 1996) display lower creativity (Rubinstein 2003). Similarly, dogmatism, which is positively associated with authoritarianism (Rokeach 1956, 1960), has been found to negatively influence creativity (Harvey 1997; Rouff 1975). In fact, conservatism (political, religious or economic), which also shares the defining characteristics of an authoritarian identity (Altemeyer 1996), negatively affects creativity (Dollinger 2007; Feist and Brady 2004; Nettle 2006; Peterson and Pang 2006; Rubinstein 2003).

Along similar lines, information-processing styles that curtail openness in thinking also hurt creativity. For instance, people high in personal need for structure – that is, the extent to which individuals desire structure and predictability and dislike uncertainty, oddity and violation of expectations (Rietzschel et al. 2007; Neuberg and Newsom 1993) – tend to process information using pre-existing simple cognitive structures, in accordance with fixed rules and procedures (Neuberg and Newsom 1993; Schaller et al. 1995), thereby negatively impacting creativity (Gołowska et al. 2014). Similarly, individuals who rely on stereotypical schemas are commonly constrained in their creativity (Antes and Mumford 2009; De Dreu et al. 2012). Although reliance on stereotypical schemas is an effective and efficient way to solve problems (Rosch 1978), such solutions usually lack originality (Leung et al. 2018). Notably, Wiley (1998) found that, when a problem requires a broad search for a solution (for example, a creative task), experts are in fact at a disadvantage, as they can become fixated on stereotypical views and pre-developed heuristic solutions gained through extensive prior experience. These findings then raise an important question regarding whether the salience of one's identity as an expert will always

hurt creativity. This question has been debated by academics, and we refer our readers to the recent work of Mehta and Dahl (2018), whose findings offer insights and directions for future research on the topic.

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

While prior research has proposed that the composition of an individual's immediate environment can play a significant role in making the aspects of one's identity salient (Reed et al. 2012), we note that the environments to which individuals are exposed over time are also fundamental in shaping identity. We argue that these long-term environmental influences have implications for creative cognition and behavior. For example, the environment dictated by one's socio-economic status (SES) has a profound impact on shaping one's identity, thinking style and reactions to different situations (Mittal and Griskevicius 2014), and thus can affect one's creativity. Indeed, it has been argued that people who grow up in different environments adopt dissimilar creative strategies when allocating and using their resources. Low-SES individuals tend to use fast life history strategies and are more likely to take risks, whereas people from high-SES backgrounds tend to exhibit slower life history strategies and are less likely to take risks (Belsky et al. 2012; Mittal and Griskevicius 2014; Simpson et al. 2012). Given the positive relationship between propensity to take risks and creativity (Sternberg and Lubart 1991, 1992; Dewett 2006, 2007), one can expect people from a low-SES environment to be more creative. Supporting this view, Mehta and Zhu (2016) demonstrate that asking participants to write a paragraph about growing up in a resource-scarce environment, which makes resource scarcity salient, leads to higher creativity in a product usage context.

In addition to SES, one's experiences, values and background may also induce identity salience that in turn may affect creativity (Reber 1995). For example, living abroad or having multicultural experiences enhances one's ability to generate novel and original ideas (Maddux and Galinsky 2009; Leung et al. 2008; Tadmor et al. 2012). Such past identity-related experiences, when made salient, affect cognitive processes such as the facilitation of cognitive flexibility, increased awareness of remote connections and associations, enhanced integrative complexity and reduced functional fixedness (Leung et al. 2008; Tadmor et al. 2012). Interestingly, the creative benefits from such multicultural experiences only materialize when individuals demonstrate openness to adapt to foreign cultures and show willingness to integrate cultural experiences into their identity (Leung et al. 2008; Maddux and Galinsky 2009).

Another line of research poses an intriguing conundrum with respect to people's experiences in moving their primary residency. Residential mobility (that is, the number of residential moves an individual makes), which is becoming a global phenomenon with people repetitively moving to new cities, countries or even continents, has been shown to breed familiarity-seeking behaviors (Oishi 2010). In particular, residential mobility has been likened to putting infants in a strange situation without a secure base, which then evokes anxiety and fosters familiarity-seeking behaviors (Oishi et al. 2012). Such familiarity-seeking in turn reduces individuals' willingness to explore novel things (Gocłowska et al. 2018), and thus could be argued to have negative implications for originality and creativity. These two lines of research offer competing perspectives with respect to the effect of immersion into new cultural environments and the outcome on one's identity and potential for creativity. Further research that explores these different perspectives would help to add understanding within the field.

STIMULUS CUES

In addition to chronic and environmental factors, stimulus cues can also enhance the salience of different aspects of a person's identity (Reed et al. 2012), thereby increasing the likelihood of subsequent identity-driven attitudes and behavior. Salience of identity in this regard can influence information-processing, thinking styles and the mental frameworks that align with creative performance. For example, the salience of social norms that form the foundation of one's identity in a social context (Hogg and Reid 2006) can have significant implications for creativity. Creativity, in essence, is a form of deviance and a divergence from established social norms (Eisenman 1991; Runco 2004). Hence, a salient normative focus, which motivates an individual to act in line with accepted social norms, reduces creativity. Interestingly, however, if being creative is recognized as an accepted social norm, then normativity salience leads to higher creativity (Mehta et al. 2017).

Adarves-Yorno et al. (2007) proposed that creative behavior is informed by normative contexts that induce identity salience. For instance, these researchers demonstrate that, when people operate as members of a group, the creative performance is situated within the boundaries of respective group norms. When the study participants were asked to collectively make a creative product, they displayed conformity to in-group norms, but not when they made the same product alone. Interestingly, however, when group identity was explicitly made salient, participants displayed higher in-group conformity, even when working on their own creations.

Furthermore, the strength of group identity can also affect creative performance. Van Dijk et al. (2009) compared the effects of high versus low group identity salience on a brainstorming task, and found that stronger group identity reduced social loafing and led to better performance. Other researchers have also reported the positive effects of strong group identity salience on creative tasks such as anagram-solving (James and Greenberg 1989) and brainstorming (Karau and Williams 1997). Such positive effects of group identity also extend to virtual team environments. Guegan et al. (2017) found that during virtual team meetings, a higher group identification, as induced through use of social identity cues, leads to higher creative performance.

In addition to group identity, salience of one's broader social relationships and multiple identities can also impact creativity. Generally, activation of a multifaceted self-concept boosts flexible thinking, which in turn drives creativity. The salience of multiple social identities (for example, gender, profession, social status, and so on) activates diverse knowledge structures and experiences, thus enabling people to think flexibly (Steffens et al. 2016). However, the effect of multiple social identities on creativity may also depend on how individuals manage and integrate those identities. In fact, people do differ in the compatibility and complementarity of their identities and how well they can integrate them (Roccas and Brewer 2002). Individuals with high versus low identity integration exhibit higher levels of creativity, but only in tasks that are relevant to the multiple identity-related knowledge domains that are salient at that moment in time. For example, female engineers with higher identity integration were found to be more creative in designing a product, but only when the product was targeted toward female users (Cheng et al. 2008).

The positive effects of a salient multifaceted self-concept also hold when an individual has multiple identities within a single domain (for example, when an individual is multiracial or bicultural). Gaither et al. (2015) found that reminding multiracial individuals about their multiple racial identities increased their ability to solve creative problems. Interestingly, reminding monoracials that they, too, have multiple identities also increased their creativity. The authors argue that making multiple-identity salient is a subtle yet powerful intervention that reduces fixed thinking and enhances creative problem-solving abilities. Similar effects have been observed for individuals who hold bicultural identities (Saad et al. 2013; Tendayi Viki and Williams 2014). Similarly, multifaceted sexual identities are also positively related to creativity. Individuals whose sexual identities are not directed exclusively towards one gender (for example, bisexual, biaffectionate or queer) have been found to be more cognitively flexible (and thereby more creative) than those who have exclusive sexual identities (for example, heterosexual,

gay/lesbian) (Konik and Crawford 2004). However, the positive effects of multiple-identity salience on flexible thinking and creativity seem to abate when the respective identities are associated with negative stereotypes. Under such conditions, identity salience induces social threat, thereby negatively affecting flexible thinking and creativity (Rydell et al. 2009).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSION

As discussed in this chapter, while an extensive amount of research has examined the effects of identity salience on creativity, it also offers avenues for new investigation. In closing the chapter, we highlight three additional areas of inquiry that present opportunities to advance our current understanding of the relationship between identity salience and creativity. The first question we raise pertains to the interplay between different aspects of identity and their consequent influence on creativity. Creativity theorists argue that creativity is a product of cognition, motivation and knowledge. Runco and Chand (1995) proposed a two-tier model of creative thinking, suggesting cognition as the primary component of the creative process, with knowledge and motivation forming the second tier of influence on creativity. Surprisingly, however, prior research has examined these three aspects (that is, cognition, motivation and knowledge) of one's identity independently when assessing their impact on creativity. Thus, we see a fertile area for future research that enhances our current understanding of how one's prior knowledge, motivation and cognitive processes (which are activated through identity salience) interact to affect creativity in the consumer context.

Second, as cross-functional teams become a mainstay of companies' innovation and new product development processes, we see a strong need to better understand how the salience of aspects of group identity may impact group-level creativity and the underlying processes that drive it. Importantly, as discussed earlier, prior research (Van Dijk et al. 2009; James and Greenberg 1989; Karau and Williams 1997) has revealed that a strong group identity enhances the creative performance of various types of creative tasks, such as anagram-solving and brainstorming. However, the observed findings seem to tell only part of the story. More work is needed to gain a better understanding of when and why group identity negatively affects creativity. For example, one consequence of having a strong and salient group identity is higher conformity to in-group norms (Spears et al. 1990; Adarves-Yorno et al. 2007). However, higher conformity pressure from in-group norms has been shown to stifle creativity (Förster et al. 2005). Hence, the arguments from the two sets of literature

appear to offer distinct conclusions. We believe there is value in future research that seeks to explicate the conditions under which salient strong group identity may enhance (versus reduce) creativity.

Finally, another very relevant and timely issue that we believe needs further attention is the impact of virtual social identities on creativity. There has been a rapid emergence of online consumer platforms for social interaction (for example, online forums, social networking websites, and so on) and virtual reality (for example, virtual worlds and virtual identities) (Zhu et al. 2012). However, little work has explored how the salience of such identities may affect one's creativity. While people may blur the boundaries between the virtual and the real (Yee and Bailenson 2007), there still remain critical differences between the two realms. For instance, in the virtual world, communicators are not in close physical proximity and cannot draw on a wealth of contextual social cues. This observation raises interesting questions: for example, would social norms be endorsed the same way in online versus offline communities, or would people be more (versus less) creative in online communities? Zhu et al. (2012) found that people in online communities perceive their social networks as cushions and demonstrate a higher propensity to take risks, which in turn can enhance creativity. However, Stephen et al. (2016) found that online platforms and networks reduce creativity, because the connectedness within those communities can increase redundancy and similarity between the ideas identified. Clearly, more research is needed to develop a better understanding of the impact of virtual social identities on creativity.

In conclusion, this chapter has attempted to review prior work that has explored how various aspects of identity, made salient through chronic factors, one's environment, and stimulus cues, can influence one's creativity. In doing so, we have attempted to provide an integrative framework of the relationship between identity salience and creativity and have identified opportunities for future investigation. This is a fruitful and exciting area of research, and we hope that more researchers will join the pursuit of knowledge within this domain.

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6. Branding virtuous victimhood: how activating the salience of a consumer's moral identity motivates resource transfers to victim groups

Maja Graso, Karl Aquino and Ekin Ok

If one looks dispassionately at the historical record, it is hard to deny that the last 250 years have witnessed unprecedented advances in social equality, respect for human rights and the alleviation of suffering (Pinker 2010, 2018; Ridley 2010). Although many around the world still face challenges that prevent them from exercising their full capabilities, the majority of people alive today are among the freest, richest and least imperiled who have ever walked the earth (Pinker 2018). No doubt some have benefited more than others from the gifts bestowed by science, commerce and the expansion of our collective moral regard (Pinker 2010, 2018; Singer 1981). Consequently, many individuals and groups around the world remain committed to informing consumers about the conditions that blight the lives of the less fortunate, while also trying to persuade these consumers to help change these conditions for the better. We refer to these individuals and groups as “advocates.” Those advocates seek to reduce or eliminate the harms experienced by “victims.” Advocates can either be victims themselves, or they can be non-victims who work on advancing the victims’ cause. Finally, we label consumers who transfer their resources to victims as “benefactors.”

In a world teeming with potential victims, advocates face a formidable challenge of trying to convince consumers to part with their resources and bestow them upon people who experience various forms of harm. Marketing science is well positioned to offer advocates with valuable insights into how they can more effectively aid their constituents by emphasizing certain components of individuals’ identities that have been shown to motivate prosociality. Specifically, we introduce the concept of “victim branding” and suggest that advocates will be maximally effective at convincing consumers to become benefactors if they can effectively signal two components of their constituents’ identity in consumers’ minds. First, they must signal that their constituents are legitimate victims of harm; second, they must communicate that those victims are also “virtuous.” We

submit that this “virtuous victim” identity signal at the group level can be a situational activator of individual consumers’ “moral identity” (Aquino and Reed 2002). Just as activating different components of individuals’ identities leads to different thoughts, feelings and even behaviors (see Reed et al. 2012, p. 314), so activating consumers’ own moral identities by exposing them to virtuous victims can trigger the morality-based intention to help those victims (Aquino et al. 2009).

Our model is presented in Figure 6.1 and consists of the following components: (1) signaling virtuous victimhood; (2) the evocation of psychological states among victim group members and their advocates that the requests or demands they make are justified; (3) the projection of their needs into the victim marketplace; and (4) the motivational effect of this projection on individual consumers.

MERCHANTS OF HARM: SEEKING RESOURCE TRANSFERS BY SIGNALING VICTIMHOOD AND VIRTUE

One of the main goals of advocates is to persuade consumers to provision victim groups with resources that can relieve their suffering. We treat this transfer of resources from benefactors to victim groups as a form of social exchange that takes place in a victim marketplace. There are many kinds of resources that could conceivably flow from consumers to victims (see Foa and Foa 1980). For example, some victim groups might request time in the form of volunteer hours, or material aid in the form of money, land or medicine. Others might demand a safer environment, or easier access to education and jobs. For other victims, the demand can also be for symbolic resources such as respect, sympathy or status equivalence. A limit to the objectives of many advocates is that the material resources victim groups seek are perceptibly finite, and the willingness of consumers to part with them can be affected by macro-economic conditions outside anyone’s control, and the nature of the resource itself (that is, time versus money) (Reed et al. 2007). In addition, constant exposure to outrage-inducing information is fatiguing and can desensitize consumers to the pleas of those in need (Crockett 2017). Finally, victim groups themselves fight fiercely for advantage (Noor et al. 2012). Therefore, any group that wants to capture a share in the victim marketplace needs to do what any company does to motivate consumption: build a brand.

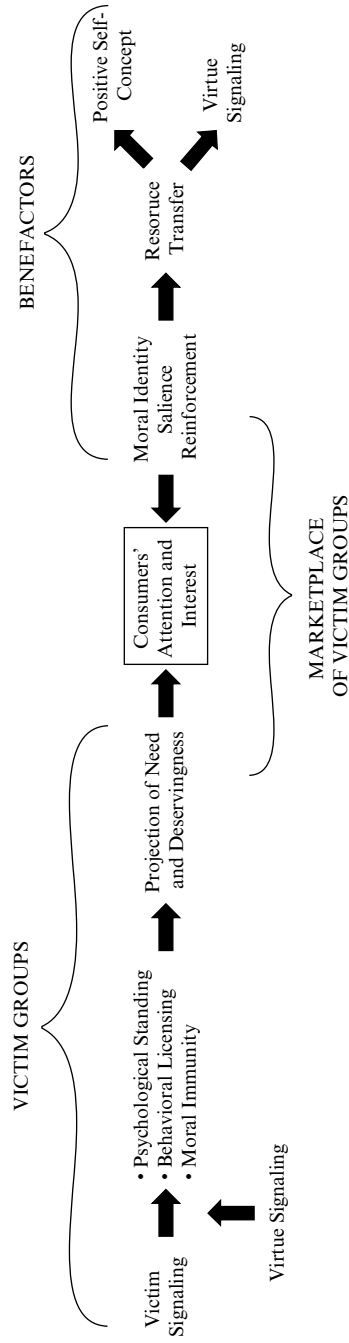


Figure 6.1 Model of victim branding

Victim Identity and Victim Signaling

Victim identity

The first step required to build a victim brand is to persuade consumers that a group with a shared identity has suffered or continues to suffer harm. Marketing scholars have studied identity signaling before (Belk 1988; Gal 2015; Levy 1959), but to our knowledge no previous studies have focused on signaling a victim identity. Adopting an assumption made by identity signaling theorists (e.g., McCracken 1989), we propose that groups can establish a brand imbued with moral meaning when their identity is built around victimization, thereby associating this group with being subjected to harm (see Schein and Gray 2018, for association between harm and morality). The potential harms to which a victim group can be subjected are vast and can include any physical, emotional, psychological or even existential torment that threatens their well-being or survival (Aquino and Thau 2009). Being a victim implies that harm has befallen the person who claims this identity, so it is no surprise that victimhood is not a desirable state for most people (see also Fassin and Rechtman 2009; Kay et al. 2005). Thus, it might seem counterintuitive to entertain the idea that victim status is a coveted brand and that signaling a victim identity can be beneficial. However, suffering in silence is not likely to initiate a resource transfer from consumers to victims, so signaling victimhood can be a powerful social influence tool that communicates the urgency and legitimacy of a group's needs.

Victim signaling

"Victim signaling" in our model refers to the public expression of one's current or historical position of suffering or disadvantage. We draw from signaling theory (Boulding and Kirmani 1993; Dunham 2011; Erdem and Swait 1998) and its connection to identity signaling in marketing contexts (Gal 2015) to explain how such expressions can be used to build a victim brand that influences consumer behavior. The basic principle of signaling theory is the transmission of information from a sender to a receiver, with the purpose of altering the behavior of receivers in line with the desires of the sender (Dunham 2011). In the case of the marketing victimhood, the ultimate aim is to establish a category label centered on a victim identity which communicates an image of need and deservingness that can induce consumers to part with their resources.

Groups attempting to benefit from the victim signal seek to gain an advantageous position in the victim marketplace. Haidt (2016) suggested that in the United States there are currently seven "sacred" identity-based victim groups occupying this space: African Americans; women; Latinos; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and related communities (LGBT+);

Native Americans; people with disabilities; and more recently, Muslims. In the context of our model, these groups would be characterized as having a strong brand. Advocates can use these brands to reliably facilitate resource transfers by appealing to consumer emotions such as sympathy and compassion, or ideals such as justice or universalism (Levy 1959; Rothschild 1979). Furthermore, a strong brand image leads to an acceptance of price premiums, decreased sensitivity to price increases, and more charitable judgments following product failures, environmental or other public relations crises (Hoeffler and Keller 2003). If emergent victim groups want to compete with the Sacred Seven and establish their own victim brand, they will need to emit a signal powerful and compelling enough to neutralize or overwhelm the signals emitted by the dominant players in the victim marketplace. If they are able to do so, we propose three mechanisms that will mediate the relationship between this signal and the demands that victims project to consumers: psychological standing, behavioral licensing and moral immunity.

Psychological standing An effective victim brand provides its designees with psychological standing, defined as a perceived legitimacy and entitlement to speak about issues relevant to one's condition of victimhood (Effron and Miller 2012). Importantly, psychological standing limits the legitimacy of opinions brought forth by those who do not have a material stake in topics under discussion. For example, many African Americans likely view themselves as having the psychological standing to discuss issues such as affirmative action or Black Lives Matter (#BLM) because they have much to gain or lose from whether these initiatives are supported. Non-African Americans lack psychological standing on these topics, so their voices will be treated by some observers as illegitimate, regardless of whether they share the same attitudes as African Americans (Effron and Miller 2012). We argue that due to their perceived legitimacy, and ability to delegitimize non-members' inputs, groups that claim psychological standing will be able to attract greater attention from consumers, make more direct demands in the victim marketplace and deflect criticism of these demands.

Behavioral licensing Signaling a victim identity also gives individuals or groups an elevated sense of entitlement and the privilege of asserting moral superiority. Together, these psychological states can license them to act in self-serving ways (Miller and Effron 2010). Licensing can also disable any inhibitions they might have to make demands on consumers to transfer their resources to victim groups and to rebuke them for not doing so. This is supported by studies that show how perceptions of collective victimization are positively correlated with the feeling that one's group

has a moral entitlement to demand an apology and seek recompense from others (see Schori-Eyal et al. 2017; Zitek et al. 2010).

Moral immunity Baumeister and Newman (1994) proposed that signaling victim status gives the signaler moral immunity, which shields the victim group from attributions of blame, the weight of accountability, and expectations of responsibility for both past and future actions. It also blocks feelings of guilt and protects in-group members' perceptions of themselves as moral agents. The advantage of belonging to a victim group immune to criticism is apparent when considering that morality is a central element of one's overall self-concept (Aquino and Reed 2002), and that most people are motivated to uphold a favorable moral evaluation of their social group (Sullivan et al. 2012). The potential link between victim status and moral identity may even explain a cycle whereby different groups seek to convince consumers that they have experienced greater hardships, and therefore their claims to victimhood are more meritorious, than those of other groups (that is, competitive victimhood) (Noor et al. 2012; Sullivan et al. 2012). More broadly known as 'oppression Olympics', such contests are essentially fights over the coveted identity of a victim.

Unworthy of victimhood Any individual or group can attempt to craft a narrative that portrays them as victims. Nonetheless, their case needs to be validated in the court of public opinion and there is no guarantee that the consumers will accept their identity claim (Viano 1989). The boldest examples of largely futile efforts to victim-signal in the current historical period in North America are Ku Klux Klan (KKK) sympathizers and NAMBLA (the North American Man/Boy Love Association, a former pedophile and pederasty advocacy group) whose members alleged having been hurt, disadvantaged or oppressed by society. Not surprisingly, these groups obtain little support from the broader public. However, consider the more nuanced case of the so-called manosphere's The Red Pill movement (Jaye 2015). The initial aim of this movement was to bring the public's attention to issues that are negatively impacting men such as custody injustices, neglected men's mental health and high occupational safety risks. According to our model, this movement could reasonably attempt to craft a victim identity, but it remains unsuccessful. One possible explanation for their failure to victim-brand effectively is that, in comparison to women, men are perceived as more agentic (Ellemers 2018), and they are more likely to engage in acts of physical aggression (Archer 2004), preventing the consumers from envisioning them as victims of harm or misfortune. To capture consumers' minds and hearts, we suggest that another signal is needed, one that some groups appear to lack: virtue.

Magic Bullets: Victim and Virtue Signaling

Virtue signaling is defined as “the conspicuous expression of moral values, done primarily with the intent of enhancing standing within a social group” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Although the term is usually applied to individuals, it can also be used to refer to a group’s efforts to present its members as morally praiseworthy. Like signaling victimhood, signaling virtue can inform the potential benefactors that a group’s pleas for resource transfer are legitimate and, more importantly, that the resources will be used appropriately. Some groups are able to signal their virtues easily because of their implied association with morality (for example, religious organizations). Most victim groups, however, have to be more strategic in their attempts, particularly given that most of them are not comprised of saints, but of ordinary people whose lives are blemished by all kinds of moral failures. Even among the Sacred Seven victim groups, one can find many examples of its members engaging in acts of violence and cruelty against those further down the chain of oppression (see Pinker 2002). Fortunately, in the histories of most victim groups can be found redeeming elements that advocates can use to signal their constituents’ moral *bona fides*.

Consider the following quote from Tara Houska, a tribal attorney and Couchiching First Nation citizen in the United States (US), describing her experiences witnessing the Standing Rock resistance against the Keystone oil pipeline: “we’re all out there standing together, because we are resilient, we are fierce, and we are teaching people how to reconnect to the earth, remembering where we come from. So much of society has forgotten this” (Houska 2017). She evokes values of communion, resilience, connectedness to the sacred, and responsibility for the earth that characterize the Indigenous people. A credible virtue signal can reassure observers that the signaller will participate in “reciprocal altruism” (Trivers 1971), associated with large-scale, mutually advantageous cooperation with strangers (Axelrod 1986). The belief that the potential recipient of the resource is virtuous and thus morally praiseworthy (Haidt and Joseph 2004) gives consumers confidence that they are not being exploited, while instilling hope that the aid recipient will “pay it forward” by upholding their own professed moral ideals (Bai 2017; Foot 1978).

CONSUMING THE VIRTUOUS VICTIM BRAND

Aiding virtuous victims, whose legitimized suffering, psychological standing and presumed moral credentials are conveniently pre-packaged,

branded and socially attested, allows consumers to acquire the currency of moral goodness. This currency can then be used to make their moral identity salient (Aquino and Reed 2002), thereby providing them with material for constructing a positive self-concept and gifting them with a warm glow that results from having acted altruistically (Andreoni 1990; Harbaugh 1998; Winterich and Barone 2011). This is in accord with Reed and Forehand's (2016) proposition that consumers' identities are flexible and dynamic, so it is conceivable that becoming a benefactor can increase the salience of consumers' moral identity in their self-concepts. If benefactors make their resource transfer public, it can signal their commitment to moral values and goals, allowing them to reap social and material benefits through reputational enhancement (Frank 2010).

To illustrate how becoming a benefactor can bestow psychological and social benefits on consumers, we turn to the dyadic theory of morality (Gray and Wegner 2009; Schein and Gray 2018). This framework suggests that when observers interpret a situation involving harm, they automatically assign to one party the role of harm-inflicting agent, and to the other that of suffering and victimized patient. Consider the following example of contemporary struggles with historic roots: the plight of African Americans (Moscovici and Pérez 2009). Since African Americans have suffered at hands of mostly white Americans, it is cognitively easier for consumers to envision present-day white Americans as perpetrators of harm in a race-based conflict or, more pejoratively, as the oppressor. Hints of this dyadic framing of morality at group level are evident in colloquialisms such as "white-splaining" or "white privilege." These rhetorical tropes imply that in comparison to other groups, the collective history of whites is one of social dominance, oppression and unearned advantages, descriptors not typically associated with conventional notions of morality. Regardless of whether a white consumer had anything to do with the history of oppression that might have been imposed on other groups, their ability to maintain a moral identity may nevertheless be compromised.

One way a consumer can escape from their self-endowed or socially endowed status as an oppressor is to replace this identity with one that casts them as a champion and supporter of victims. By bestowing their resources upon a virtuous group that has experienced harm, particularly at the hands of people like themselves, consumers can signal that they are not agents of harm, but allies in the struggle for justice. Those endowed with an identity that is associated with an oppressor group may even perceive a greater psychological standing to become benefactors, because they may not only feel more responsible for the harm experienced by victims, but they might also feel a more pressing need to disassociate themselves from the "oppressor identity." After having made their resource transfer,

benefactors can then bask in the warm glow of having acted morally. The transfer not only reinforces their moral identity and keeps it salient (Reed and Forehand 2016), but it may even help them to escape the psychic bondage imposed by guilt of unearned privilege (that is, stigma reversal; Killian 1985).

BRANDING THE PERPETUALLY VIRTUOUS VICTIM

We have explained how establishing a virtuous victim brand can benefit groups who effectively claim this status. Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that they will not easily surrender their brand and the advantages it confers. Lengthening the life-cycle of the virtuous victim brand can be achieved in three ways: (1) identifying new harms in the environment; (2) increasing the inclusivity of their message; and (3) maintaining the exclusivity of their suffering.

Identifying New Harms in the Environment

Our model suggests that a virtuous victim identity is built upon an allegation of harm. However, harm is an elusive concept and its inherent subjectivity makes its definition highly susceptible to cultural changes (Schein and Gray 2018). Haslam's (2016) notion of "concept creep" illustrates how the meaning of harm itself can change over time. For example, term "aggression" used to imply overt violence, but now even innocuous comments such as "Where are you from?" could be perceived as forms of aggression (that is, microaggression; Sue et al. 2007). Therefore, merely asserting harm in the present historical period may be sufficient to establish psychological standing, acquire moral immunity and license objectionable behavior. But the domain of harm must also be managed, to allow some groups to command a level of moral authority and propagate their status as victims, while making it harder for other groups to claim that they too have been harmed. An example of managing the concept of harm can be seen in how some groups argue that other groups cannot claim to be victims of discrimination or prejudice because the latter are in positions of power. If the harmed group simultaneously portrays itself as working to prevent a similar fate from befalling others, they can also signal their virtue. It is conceivable that if the public is sufficiently credulous, a group can define harm in such an expansive way that it would be impossible to ever eradicate it from their lives. When that happens, a group could allege perpetual victimhood.

Increasing Relevance Through Inclusivity

The sphere of harm will not necessarily expand indefinitely; it can also contract. Thus, victim groups will need to rebrand and alter their message in accordance with changing times if they want to appeal to the largest possible segment of consumers. For example, in her lament against contemporary feminism, Crispin (2017) suggested that in order to remain relevant, the movement had to assert that it is possible to don the feminist label without endorsing the philosophies of its more radical sisters, who arguably tainted the movement by making it more militant than what is palatable to the majority of consumers. Such inclusion-oriented efforts at the psychological level attempt to satisfy a need for belonging (Baumeister and Leary 1995), which is arguably one of the reasons why people signal particular identities. Increasing inclusivity is a crucial self-preservation tactic because it can promote solidarity among sufferers. Acknowledging others' suffering can reduce the potential for costly internecine conflicts within the victim space that occur when some victim groups believe that their needs and interests are not being recognized by other groups (Shnabel et al. 2013). In contrast, social exclusion of victim groups can generate enmity, as is evident at the individual level (Twenge et al. 2001), thereby intensifying the dynamic of competitive victimization inherent in the victim marketplace and threatening the virtuous victim brand.

Maintaining Exclusivity of Suffering Through Limiting Label Use

Consumers' resources are finite, so advocacy groups must be wary of being associated with those who do not possess the desired characteristic of virtue. Allowing too many other groups to claim virtuous victim identity might devalue its brand, which suggests the existence of the optimal balance of inclusivity and exclusivity. Competitive victimization research suggests that individuals experiencing suffering will not willingly acknowledge that other groups may have an equal or more compelling claim to victim status (Noor et al. 2012; Sullivan et al. 2012). Consider the responses to the scholarly article by Tuvel (2017), who used the case of Rachel Dolezal, a white woman who identified as African American, to argue that because the society has accepted transgender individuals, it should be equally open to those who identify as trans-racial. The ferocity of critics who sought to silence and discredit Tuvel's thesis (Schuessler 2017) suggests that victim groups that tread too heavily on the domain of other victim groups will be met with resistance. With this in mind, we conclude the chapter by considering the challenges that virtuous victims and their advocates will inevitably face when trying to build a sustainable brand.

END GAME: THE LIMITS OF VIRTUOUS VICTIM SIGNALING

The global reach of social media, the triumph of Enlightenment values (Pinker 2018), and a shift towards embracing a “victim culture” (Campbell and Manning 2018) have allowed victim branding to become a prominent and effective social persuasion tool. Nonetheless, the ability of groups to sustain a virtuous victim brand must contend with market forces not unlike those faced by any other product that wants to remain relevant, desirable and self-expressive to consumers. It is conceivable that competitive victimization and the sheer volume of new groups attempting to identify themselves as victims will eventually threaten any group’s dominant position in the victim marketplace.

In addition to the dynamics of market saturation, there is a potential for consumer backlash against the spread of victimhood culture. Consumers who hold ideological convictions different from those espoused by certain victim groups might find their signaling efforts distasteful, socially corrosive and void of virtue necessary to make the consumers’ moral identity salient. Thus, they will not only withhold resources from these groups, but might actively oppose them. Consider the case of Ms Emma Gonzalez, a Parkland, Florida high school mass shooting survivor who stood on the stage for 6 minutes and 20 seconds as a powerful illustration of a lapsed time that claimed lives of 17 of her classmates. Ms Gonzalez’s simple statement was meant to influence gun control legislation. However, not all who saw her message received it graciously. Her actions were discredited and twisted, an altered photo of her tearing up the US Constitution made rounds on the Internet, and attempts were made to strip her of virtue, credibility and victim status while casting her as an enemy of patriots and gun rights supporters (Mezzofiore 2018).

Consumers can reject products that they find inconsistent with their ideological beliefs (Winterich et al. 2013), so it seems reasonable to suspect that as the victim space becomes more crowded, some groups attempting to build a sustainable brand will feel compelled to aggressively emit signals of virtue and victimhood that are more strident and perhaps indecorous than they were in the past. If this happens, many consumers might turn away not only from the group attempting to build its brand, but perhaps even from victims as a social category, much to the detriment of those in need. The potential for overzealous virtuous victim signaling to have spillover effects is already evident in declining alumni donations at several prominent universities in response to student advocates’ attempts to push forward their ideas of social justice and control over free speech (Hartocollis 2016).

Perhaps the most concerning problem is the lack of moral authority of anything imposed by force (Glover 2001). Advocacy groups who attempt to force others into accepting their demands and identity claims risk losing their patina of virtue. We speculate that in these polarized times, the willingness to show moderation and balance in making demands on consumers, and to clearly state what they promise in exchange for benefactors' generosity and moral assent, may prove to be the most effective way for victim groups to maintain their virtuous standing.

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PART II

THE IDENTITY ASSOCIATION PRINCIPLE

7. Implicit egocentrism in consumer behavior

Scott Connors and Andrew W. Perkins

THE CENTRALITY OF THE SELF WITHIN THE ASSOCIATIVE STRUCTURE OF MEMORY

Previous research conceptualizes the self-concept as a system of affective-cognitive relationships in memory that defines the individual and serves as an interpretive framework for the individual's environment (Greenwald and Banaji 1995; Greenwald et al. 2002a; Greenwald et al. 1988; Higgins et al. 1985; Kihlstrom and Cantor 1984; Markus and Nurius 1986). The self-concept represents the "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (Rosenberg 1979, p. 7), and comprises not only associations with personal attributes (for example, intelligent), but also associations with social groups (for example, motorcycle rider), social roles (for example, professor), and objects or brands (for example, motorcycle, Harley-Davidson). The self-concept evolves through both conscious and unconscious processes (Bargh et al. 1992; Fazio et al. 1986; Greenwald and Banaji 1995; Hetts et al. 1999) and eventually becomes the center of nearly all cognitive processing, including goal formation, motivation and behavior (Bargh et al. 2001; Chartrand and Bargh 2002; Markus and Nurius 1986). Subsets of these self-associations that may include information about social roles, attributes and associated objects or brands are called "identities," which reflect "any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment" (Reed II et al. 2012, p. 312). Identities may be activated by environmental or social cues, self-reflection, or goals elicited by the needs, wants or desires of the individual. In this chapter, we focus on the research that exists examining the centrality of the self within one's social knowledge structure, and tend to focus on the self-concept generally, while acknowledging that self-identities are a subset of the much larger body of associations linked to the self in memory.

IMPLICIT VERSUS EXPLICIT SELF-CONCEPT

Researchers have made a distinction between the explicit and the implicit self-concept (Greenwald and Banaji 1995; Greenwald et al. 2002a).

Traditionally, researchers have matched each of these self-concepts to the measurement technique used to assess them: the explicit self-concept is usually assessed using self-report measures completed by the consumer. It is assumed that the individual completing the self-report measure actively introspects on those associations in memory in order to provide attributes or attitudes associated with and/or descriptive of himself or herself. In contrast, the implicit self-concept is usually assessed using indirect measures (such as the Implicit Association Test, or IAT; Greenwald et al. 1998) that rely on response times in order to measure the relative strength of association between self-related objects in memory. Dominant models of social cognition (Gawronski and Bodenhausen 2006; Strack and Deutsch 2004) suggest two distinct but related systems of processing. Although these models are primarily concerned with attitude change, the characteristics of these models can apply to the processing of self-related information as well.

A UNIFIED THEORY OF IMPLICIT SOCIAL COGNITION

Greenwald et al. (2002a) present an egocentric, unified theory that synthesizes previous research examining implicit attitudes, self-esteem and self-identity into a testable model. This “balanced identity” theory is based upon three assumptions drawn from key facets of social psychology. First, social knowledge in memory can be represented as a network of variable-strength associations between self-related objects in memory. Second, the self is conceptually located at the center of this social knowledge network. Third, self-positivity, or the relationship between the self and positive valence, is the assumed natural state for the majority of individuals (Farnham et al. 1999). These assumptions result in a network of knowledge about the self that includes attributes (for example, professor or short) linked with the self, and valences associated with those attributes. Chen (Chapter 20 in this volume), suggests that these relationships, more than just a list of attributes, are defined by how the individual believes that the features that make up the self are related to each other. Specifically, the more central a feature is, the more that the individual will believe that feature is a defining attribute of the self.

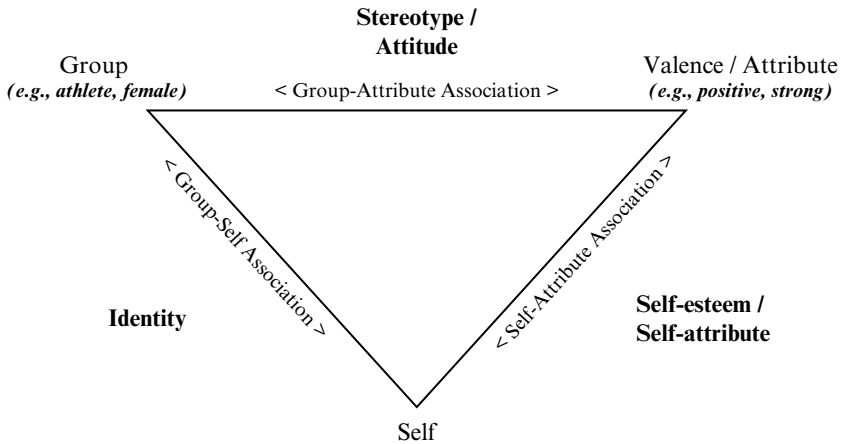
Within the balanced identity model, Greenwald et al. (2002a) make predictions about the relationships between these social objects. These relationships are represented as triads of associations that influence each other in ways similar to those suggested in classic cognitive consistency theory (Festinger 1957; Heider 1958; Osgood and Tannenbaum 1955). A

triad representing a self-identity might include the concept of self, a group (for example, a group that the individual is a member of, perhaps gender or race), and a mental representation of an attribute (for example, a valence). An association between the concept of self and valence is self-esteem (Farnham et al. 1999; Greenwald and Banaji 1995); an association between the concept of self and a group is an identity (Greenwald et al. 2002a); an association between a group and an attribute would be a stereotype; while an association between that same group and valence is conceptualized as an attitude. To prevent associational conflict between these triads of associations, individuals unconsciously bring the various associations into alignment via the balance-congruity principle (see also Simpson et al., Chapter 11 in this volume, for a discussion of evidence that suggest that individuals actively dissociate with undesired identity attributes). Thus, a given trait that is more strongly associated with positive valence should become more strongly associated with the self-concept when there is an *a priori* link between self and positive valence (positive implicit self-esteem). In practice, three IATs are used to capture these relationships: self-identity, self-esteem, and either implicit stereotype or attitudes. The interrelationship between any two of the legs of the triangle has been shown to predict the magnitude of the third (Greenwald et al. 2002a). Further, these same relationships do not appear using equivalent, self-report measures, suggesting at the very least that responding to those self-report measures evokes a different type of processing. These relationships are presented in Figure 7.1.

Taken together, and consistent with the identity association principle described by Reed II et al. (2012), one mechanism by which objects associated with the self-concept or a particular self-identity are imbued with positive valence is via the creation of links between that object and the pre-existing positive valence associated with the self (self-esteem). Next, we review a number of studies that make use of this principle.

SELF-CENTRALITY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Within the consumer behavior literature, research built upon egocentric models of cognition has laid the groundwork for associative accounts of a number of consumer behavior phenomena including the effects of consumer choice and ownership, in-group/out-group effects, and consumer–brand connections. The importance of establishing and managing the self-associations implied by such a model is emphasized by the notion that objects that are associated with the self-concept are rendered more accessible in memory (Burnkrant and Unnava 1995) and, as a result, have



Source: Adapted from Greenwald et al. (2002a).

Figure 7.1 *Balanced identity triad*

a positive impact on key marketing outcomes including brand awareness, consumer-based brand equity and product choice (e.g., Keller 1993, 2003). For example, Mercurio and Forehand (2011) demonstrate that the activation of a self-identity can facilitate the formation of links between the brand and the identity at the time of encoding, and enhance the retrieval of this information from memory at the time of recall. The association of this information with an identity leads to increased accessibility as a result of the close connection between this information and the self-concept, an effect that is shown to be more prevalent when the product itself possesses some degree of identity association (that is, identity relevance; Reed II et al. 2012).

Identity-Based Formation of Self–Object Associations

Amongst the early research exploring the cognitive associations between the consumer's self-concept and the products and brands that they use to define it, Brunel et al. (2004) demonstrate the validity of implicit measures in capturing the strength of the association between a brand and the consumers' self-concept. Mac and personal computer (PC)-user participants completed IAT measures of both implicit attitudes towards the brand and implicit self-brand association (referred to as relationship strength) in addition to explicit measures of attitudes, ownership, and usage frequency. Results indicate that while both Mac and PC users displayed

strong implicit and explicit attitudes towards their respective brands, evidence of implicit self-brand associations were only found for Mac users. Participants who indicated more positive explicit attitudes, greater usage frequency or ownership of Mac products indicated stronger self-Mac associations, while no effect was found for PC users. While this finding supports the validity of the implicit self-brand association, the absence of any such associations for PC users suggests that different mechanisms may influence the establishment of strong and lasting associations between the brand and the consumer's self-concept.

Extant literature suggests that creating a link between an object or group and a relevant self-identity is an effective means of forming implicit self-object associations. The basis for this builds from Tajfel's (1982) seminal work on "minimal group" effects which demonstrates that intergroup conflict is not required for out-group discrimination to occur. In a set of experiments, participants were assigned to groups based upon their performance on a mental task. Results indicated that participants allocated greater resources to those who had performed similarly to themselves on the task than to those in another group who had all performed similarly, but differently than the participant. That is, even with a "minimal groups" manipulation, people seem to quickly form an association between themselves and a previously unknown in-group. Indeed, a number of researchers have found that the minimal groups paradigm is sufficient for increasing the favorability of implicit attitudes towards such in-groups, and will even protect this in-group at the expense of an out-group (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo et al. 2001; Otten and Wentura 1999).

Extending upon this minimal group paradigm, Greenwald et al. (2002b) introduce "implicit partisanship" demonstrating that similar effects can occur even in the absence of group membership; and, importantly, demonstrate that this in-group favorability is associated with an increase in implicit identification with the group. For example, in Experiment 1 participants were familiarized with the names of individuals comprising two four-member teams and then were asked to memorize the names of the four members of one of the two teams. Results from categorization tasks based on partial Implicit Association Tests show faster response latencies when the studied group was paired with self-related words compared to when paired with other related words. That is, the simple act of memorizing the names of members of one group was sufficient to establish an association between the group and the self, relative to the non-studied group.

These minimal groups and implicit partisanship effects provide an important basis for understanding the associative effects of identity-based marketing. In a working paper, Connors and Perkins (2019) examine

identity-based branding strategies to elucidate the effects that such efforts have on consumers' social knowledge structures; specifically, the association between the brand and the self-concept. Extant research has tackled this association at the aggregate level. In their work on self-brand connections, Escalas and Bettman (2003, 2005) draw on brand symbolism to suggest that brands associated or used by either in-groups or aspirational out-groups become incorporated into consumers' mental representations of the self, and demonstrate the development of strong explicit connections between identity-relevant brands and the consumer's self-concept (for example, "I can identify with Brand X," "Brand X reflects who I am"). Escalas et al. (Chapter 8 in this volume) extend this idea further, proposing that self-brand connections form not only due to brand symbolism but also one's personal experience with the brand.

In contrast, Connors and Perkins (2019) incorporate an egocentric view of cognition to capture the generation of an association between the brand and the self-concept that occurs when an association is established between a brand and a self-relevant group. According to the balance-congruity principle of balance theory (Greenwald et al. 2002a, p.6): "When two unlinked or weakly linked nodes share a first-order link, the association between these two should strengthen." Thus, when the brand positions itself alongside either an aspirational or an occupied identity, the first-order link that both the brand and the consumer's self-concept share with this group results in the strengthening of the associative link between the brand and the self-concept. This framework has similarly been applied to examine threat (Spangenberg and Angle, Chapter 13 in this volume) and differences between temporal selves (Dagogo-Jack, Chapter 10 in this volume)

Testing this in a controlled experiment required an application of the minimal groups paradigm. Participants were asked to complete a short BuzzFeed-style personality quiz to answer the question of: "Which shape are you?" (adapted from Tajfel 1970). The results generated by the quiz manipulated participants' association with either a circle or a triangle group in a between-subjects setting. Participants then completed an implicit sorting task (adapted from the IAT; Greenwald et al. 1998; Perkins and Forehand 2012) designed to forge an association between the target group (triangle versus circle) and a target object (land versus sea). Additionally, a control group was included in which participants were informed that they would receive the results of the quiz at the conclusion of the experiment, so that there would be no group assignment. Next, participants completed implicit measures of attitudes towards the target object, self-object association and measures of explicit object attitudes. Finally, participants were informed that they would receive a free poster to

thank them for their participation and were asked to choose which of the six images (land versus sea) used in the study they would like to receive as a poster. Results show that creating an association between the individual and a novel group, in addition to an association between the group and an ostensibly unrelated object, resulted in the formation of an association between the self and the object. This finding suggests an extension to identity-based marketing strategies in that advertisements subtly linking the consumer to an arbitrary group (for example, based on an attribute they possess, or how they use the particular product) that is tied to the brand can lead to the formation of a self–brand association and positive implicit brand attitudes. Furthermore, examining how these implicit associations reflect explicit beliefs and choice, participants' implicit attitudes were found to predict explicit attitudes, whereas the implicit self–object association predicted participants' actual choice behavior, emphasizing the importance of the self–object connection in uniquely influencing consumer behavior.

While efforts to establish or strengthen an association between a product or brand and a desirable self-identity can have favorable effects for the brand, this is not always the case. Dimofte et al. (2015) adopt the egocentric cognitive model of balanced identity theory (Greenwald et al. 2002a) to highlight the motivating role of self-esteem in order to delineate contrasting effects of aspirational advertising. Aspirational advertisements lead to social comparisons that have direct implications for consumers' self-evaluations. When these comparisons are positive (that is, "I belong to this group, the product is associated with this group") they will yield positive evaluations and brand behaviors (e.g., Bolton and Reed 2004). However, when the aspirational advertisement results in unfavorable comparisons between the consumer and a product-related social identity (that is, "the spokesperson is an award-winning professional chef, I am just an amateur home cook") the advertisement can have negative implications for the product or brand. As this negative comparison makes salient that one does not possess the desired attributes that characterize the identity, this may render the set of associations between the self, attribute and valence nodes negative, leading to a decrease in self-esteem to maintain balance amongst the associations. Results employing both implicit and explicit measures demonstrate that aspirational advertising can lead to lowered collective self-esteem (Crocker and Luhtanen 1990; Luhtanen and Crocker 1992), which in turn can lead to a decrease in product attitudes, provided the comparisons are both unfavorable and salient. It is suggested that this detrimental effect may be actively mitigated when consumers are able to avoid experiencing the identity threat (for example, by deeming that they are not the target of the advertisement, or devaluing the ad source).

Choice-Based Formation of Self–Object Associations

The simple act of choosing a product or brand from a set of alternatives can establish a link between the brand or product and the consumer's self-concept. Providing an alternative account for the positive effects of choice (for example, ownership or spreading of alternatives; Beggan 1992; Brehm 1956), Gawronski et al. (2007) demonstrate that choosing an object is sufficient to create an association between an object node and the self node in memory. As a result, implicit self-evaluations (that is, implicit self-esteem) associatively transfer to the object, linking it to the valence of self-associations. Participants were instructed to choose between one of two color image prints that they would be receiving as part of the study. Following this task, participants completed either a measure of implicit evaluations of the object (Experiment 1) or self–object association strength (Experiment 2) measured using Fazio et al.'s (1995) affective priming task. Taken together, the results indicate that after choosing an object, implicit evaluations of the object become more positive and self-object associations become stronger than both prior to the decision and relative to the rejected object. Experiment 4 further demonstrates that this associative self-anchoring holds in the absence of post-decisional dissonance (that is, when objects are assigned at random), suggesting that post-decisional changes in implicit evaluations occur due to the hypothesized associative transfer effects rather than the conscious experience of dissonance. For marketing management, this finding provides intuitive insights for strategies such as trial products and memberships; provided that the consumer makes a choice to engage in the trial, this action can lead to an automatic association between the branded object and the consumer's self-concept.

While Gawronski et al. (2007) examine instances in which possession is consciously understood by the individual, Perkins and Forehand (2012) provide evidence that these associative self-linkages can be formed non-volitionally: that is, absent of any conscious choice, ownership or self-affirmation motivation. Self-valence transfer can occur outside of an individual's awareness, in situations where no conscious possession exists. Participants completed self-categorization tasks (Experiments 1 and 2) to indirectly forge associations between participants' self and a target fictional brand or product category (that is, digital versus analogue clocks). In each experiment, the results indicate that this non-volitional self-association leads to the associative transfer of positive self-valence to the target brand or category via the newly formed association between the target object and the self. That is, strong positive implicit evaluations of the brand arise as a result of the unconscious association created between the brand and the self-concept. Implicit measures of self–object, object attitude and self-esteem association

strength demonstrate that this transfer effect occurs as a function of one's implicit self-esteem (Farnham et al. 1999). Thus, as one's implicit self-esteem tends to generally be positive within a normal population (Bosson et al. 2000; Greenwald and Farnham 2000; Koole et al. 2001), the simple act of creating an association between the brand and the consumer's self-concept is sufficient to establish or strengthen positive implicit brand attitudes.

Tietje and Brunel (2005) apply Greenwald et al.'s (2002a) balance theory to develop a consumer-focused "unified implicit brand theory." The theoretical model views the consumer's self-centric social knowledge structure (SKS) as consisting of: (1) brand attitudes (that is, the association between a brand node and a valence node); (2) brand beliefs (that is, the association between a brand node and a non-valence attribute node); (3) brand identification (that is, the association between the brand node and the self); and (4) self-esteem (that is, the association between the self and a valence node). From this brand knowledge structure come two key propositions. First, that brand attitudes exist as a multiplicative function of brand identification and self-esteem. That is, if both the brand node and valence node share a first-order association with the self, the activation of this link will serve to form and strengthen the association between the brand node and valence node. Self-esteem tends to be positive for the general population and this valence transfers to the brand node as per balance theory. Second, that brand personalities exist as a multiplicative function of brand identification and one's personality. This proposition provides an associative account of the positive effects on consumers' affective, attitudinal and behavioral responses to brands that occur when the personality of the brand aligns with the personality of the consumer (e.g., Aaker 1999; Grohmann 2009).

Future Directions for Self-Associations in Consumer Behavior

Research adopting an egocentric view of consumers' social knowledge structures emphasizes that the associations commonly of interest to consumer behavior researchers (for example, self-brand associations, brand attitudes) do not exist in isolation (see also Johar et al., Chapter 9 in this volume). Given the centrality of the self-concept throughout models of human cognition, and its impact on consumers' evaluations, judgments, choice and brand awareness, future research is needed to understand the broader network of these associations as they relate to the various identities that comprise key facets of the consumer's self-concept. While the primary paradigm within consumer behavior research has been to examine a cognitive association between the self-concept and a particular brand or identity, future research would benefit from striving to understand how these

associations interact. A comprehensive implicit model incorporating the interaction between the self, brand, valence and social group nodes would allow for an in-depth examination of the associative effects of identity-based branding efforts on consumers' broader brand knowledge structures. Through an application of balance theory to the brand knowledge structure, assessing changes to attitudes and subsequent behavior due to a shock to the consumer's associative system, such as launching a new brand strategy centered around the current target market's out-group (for example, Old Spice male grooming products) or a negative action by the brand or an associated in-group, should be possible. Studying this broader network brings a new level of complexity as numerous self-related associations may be concurrently in flux. Thus, more research into this area is necessary.

Further, while it is common practice to prime an identity and examine the downstream effects on a variable of interest, such an approach overlooks that consumers have myriad identities, each possessing a first-order association to the consumers' self-concept that can be activated in memory throughout their day-to-day routine by the surrounding environment (McGuire 1984; McGuire et al. 1978; Reed II et al. 2012), strength of ties to the self-concept (Stayman and Deshpande 1989) and presence of outgroups (e.g., Forehand et al. 2002; Mackie and Smith 1998; Marques et al. 1988). Thus, there is a need for more research adopting a multiple-identities approach. Consider a situation in which the actions of a brand threaten a consumer's identity. From an associative perspective, the traditional single-identity focus would suggest that the actions of the brand would diminish its association with the relevant identity, resulting in the consumer dissociating from the brand. However, a multiple-identity approach acknowledges that while the link between the threatened identity may be diminished, the consumer may still associate the brand with other identities, perhaps serving as a basis for the preservation of a strong connection with the brand. Thus, a multiple-identity perspective may help account for why many consumers are quick to verbally disparage a brand after a transgression, or ill-conceived identity-based branding campaign, yet still continue to patronize the brand.

As Reed II and Forehand (2016) note, "on the rare occasions that multiple identities have been considered in concert, the results suggest a more nuanced view where the various identities compete or interact with one another" (see, e.g., Aquino et al. 2007; Fimmel et al. 2011; Winterich et al. 2009). As a result, further research is needed to provide a more nuanced understanding of the broader associative network encompassing consumers' identities and the bases of their brand associations, and this work begins at the heart of these social knowledge structures: the consumer's self-concept.

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8. Reminiscing on self–brand connections: differentiating experiential versus symbolic origins

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Tarje Gaustad*

I identify with the Lego brand because I have many happy memories of playing with Legos as a child. They will always be a part of me.

Self–brand connections (SBCs) have been conceptualized as a link between a brand and a consumer’s identity (Escalas 2004), that is, the mental representation of the kind of person they are or wish to become (Reed et al. 2012). Most SBC research focuses on how these connections are formed and how different degrees of SBC impact consumers’ behavior, as consumers use brands to construct and communicate their identities. This focus is inherently on the symbolic nature of brands as props that consumers utilize as they participate in the staging of their lives (Goffman 1959), and builds on the identity principle of association, where objects obtain meaning as they are associated with a particular consumer identity (Reed et al. 2012).

In this chapter, we attempt to shed light on another aspect of SBCs that has received less research attention. Specifically, we focus on how consumers’ personal experiences with brands lead to SBCs. These connections, while still encapsulating an association between the brand and the consumer’s identity, are based on the brand as a representation of the life of the consumer, rather than as a demonstrative symbol of who the consumer perceives themselves, or wishes themselves, to be. In the process of exploring this understudied aspect of SBCs, we develop a scale to measure experiential origins of SBCs, and differentiate the concept from SBCs based on symbolic origins. Thus, this chapter largely focuses on the explicit processes that lead to SBCs (and uses explicit measurement devices), in contrast to work on implicit processes in identification (cf. Connors and Perkins, Chapter 7 in this volume). We end the chapter with a series of potential research directions to guide future exploration into the nature and outcomes of experiential SBC.

SELF-BRAND CONNECTIONS

Consumer research has demonstrated that people use brands to create, sustain or reconstruct desired identities (McCracken 1988). Brands can also be used in identity expression, whether to others or to oneself (e.g., Rucker and Cannon, Chapter 12 in this volume). Brands act as symbols of personal accomplishment, provide self-esteem, allow for both differentiation and affiliation, and help people through life transitions (e.g., Fournier 1998; Aggarwal 2004; Swaminathan et al. 2007; Batra et al. 2012). The connection between a brand and an individual's identity can be made in a variety of ways when brands are used to meet higher-order, psychological needs, such as self-construction, social integration, self-differentiation, self-presentation and signaling, or even religiosity (e.g., Barbour et al., Chapter 24 in this volume; Briley et al., Chapter 25 in this volume; Chaplin et al., Chapter 29 in this volume; Cheng et al. 2011; Ferraro et al. 2013; Thomson et al. 2005).

Brand Meaning

How can brands do all these things? They are able to do so because many brands signify more than just the sum of their attributes. Consumers ascribe brands with intrinsic meaning that makes them worth more than the value of their utilitarian features. As an example of special meaning, many people become particularly attached to their first brand of car. The car provides freedom and independence as part of a rite of passage into adulthood. Important memories become associated with the car, such as going to the prom or high school graduation. The car may be a used, second-hand vehicle, but if purchased with money from one's first job, it can symbolize accomplishment. Based on any or all of these factors, the consumer may come to associate positive feelings and memories beyond the physical automobile itself, and onto the brand.

In the example above, there are at least two aspects of what a brand means. First, there is the brand's image, which is primarily a function of marketers' actions and other external influences, such as culture. McCracken's (1988) model of meaning transfer asserts that meanings "get into" a brand through advertising, the fashion system and other cultural influences, such as reference groups and celebrity endorsements (Escalas and Bettman 2015). Marketers engage in many different marketing and communication processes and techniques to create a unique, meaningful brand image and positioning for their target consumers, from traditional advertising to social media, product design and packaging, product placement and event marketing. Beyond marketers' control, our culture influ-

ences what a brand means, through the interpretation of artists, writers, directors, social groups and influencers.

Second, and of central importance in this chapter, what a brand means to a particular consumer is influenced by their personal experiences with the brand. Consumers bring their own life experiences with them to every encounter with a brand. Consumers learn about brands as they interact with them in the process of living their lives. Brands can become part of consumers' autobiographical memories of their past experiences with the brand. For example, if tennis is important to you, your numerous experiences with your Dunlop racket will be incorporated into your tennis player identity. As noted by Zauberaman et al. (Chapter 14 in this volume), consumers utilize their accumulated experiences to establish and verify their identities. In sum, brand image and personal experience together form a consumer's cognitive brand associations, that is, what a brand means.

Link to Self

Consumers value psychological and symbolic brand benefits because they help them to construct and cultivate their central or salient identities, as well as express these identities, publicly or privately. In the process of using brands to achieve self-identity goals, the brand's meaning and associations may become linked to the consumer's mental representation of self. This connection with a particular consumer identity, through which the brand becomes meaningful, corresponds to the identity principle of association (Reed et al. 2012). Furthermore, the deliberate processes that lead to the formation of SBCs correspond to the identity relevance principle, where consumers' evaluations and related behaviors involve the extent to which the brand, in this case, is relevant to a particular identity (Reed et al. 2012). Thus, SBCs can arise when the brand defines an identity, communicates an identity, or helps to achieve identity-related goals or actions. We conceptualize these identity-based brand linkages at the aggregate level, that is, the extent to which individuals have incorporated specific brands into their self-concepts or identities, without specifying particular identities. We propose that the set of brand associations can be more meaningful the more closely it is associated with a particular, salient identity, regardless of which identity that is.

Historically, SBCs have been operationalized using a seven-item scale (Escalas 2004), which encompasses the strength of the linkage between the brand and the consumer's identity, rather than focusing on specific brand associations, because brand meaning is most often dependent upon the entire constellation, or gestalt, of brand associations (Escalas and Bettman 2003). Self-brand connections subsume the collection of brand

associations, broadly defined to include meaning created by the cultural world around the consumer as well as the consumer's own personal memories of the brand. In sum, an SBC is a comprehensive assessment of the mental linkage between what the brand means to a particular consumer and that consumer's identity, based on conceptualizing consumers' interactions with brands as a constructive, active identity-building process.

Our past research has demonstrated that consumers often link the set of brand associations to their mental representation of the self, creating SBCs. For example, we find that consumers are more likely to develop an SBC when there is a strong usage association between a reference group and the brand as well as between the reference group and the consumer's identity, as consumers appropriate reference group imagery to meet identity-related needs (Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005). Additionally, we find that brands endorsed by celebrities take on associations that allow consumers to define and create their own identity (Escalas and Bettman 2015, 2017). Taken altogether, our research provides evidence that consumers use brands to communicate their identities, appropriating brand associations that characterize reference groups and celebrities, and form SBCs as a result of this process.

Thus, much research has investigated the nature and consequences of consumer–brand bonds (see also, Gaustad et al. 2018; Gaustad et al. forthcoming; Lin and Sung 2014; Ferraro et al. 2013; Batra et al. 2012; Cheng et al. 2011; Stokburger-Sauer et al. 2012; Park et al. 2010; Swaminathan et al. 2007). However, the conceptualization of SBCs in past research focuses on holistic, overall symbolic connections to brands and does not distinguish between different sources that give rise to those connections. In this chapter, we argue that consumers can develop SBCs for different reasons. Brands can support or reflect consumer identities and thus embody the type of person a consumer aspires to think, feel and be (symbolic SBC), and/or brand connections can be based on idiosyncratic memories and life experiences (experiential SBC). While our approach here treats these two sources of SBC separately, we are not proposing that symbolic and experiential SBCs are orthogonal. We believe that both can exist simultaneously and that the differences are a matter of the degree as to whether SBCs are more symbolic or experiential.

IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENCES

Most research to date on SBCs has focused on the symbolic nature of the link to identity, but an important aspect of what a brand means is a function of the personal experiences the consumer has with the brand.

Returning to the example of a consumer's first car, the brand of automobile may symbolize independence and accomplishment, but at the same time, the consumer has autobiographical memories of how the brand served a role in their rite of passage into adulthood. Thus, the brand is connected to the self both as the consumer uses the brand to communicate independence, and as the brand represents an event that the consumer considers significant in the development of an adult identity. In other words, the experience(s) that a consumer has with a brand are another important source of identity associations, leading to the development of SBC.

During the last two decades, researchers in marketing and psychology have investigated the experience construct from different angles. In marketing, both the academic and the managerial press have encouraged brands to benefit from using experiential marketing, or surrounding their products and brands with experiences of different types: sensorial, emotional, and so on (LaSalle and Britton 2002; Pine and Gilmore 1999; Schmitt 1999). Indeed, brands that are more experiential provide more satisfaction and garner greater consumer loyalty (Brakus et al. 2009). On the other hand, the field of psychology has investigated the difference between experiential purchases, defined as an event or series of events that a person lives through (a vacation, a gym membership, or a night at the theater), and material possessions (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). This interest has been largely triggered by the contention that – once basic needs are covered – experiences are better at advancing happiness than material possessions (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003). The experiences a consumer goes through are also perceived to be self-definitional and contribute more to a person's identity than the material possessions a consumer may own (Carter and Gilovich 2012). In this chapter, we argue that brands can be intertwined with life events; thus, these important consequences for the self do not have to be exclusive to experiences. Gilovich's dichotomy, differentiating material possessions from experiences, can also be thought of as a continuum: some products and brands are more experiential than others. This resonates with the perspective of marketers, who assert that the value of all goods and services comes from the experience of using them (Gummeson 1995).

Experiences turn into autobiographical memories, defined as memories of personal events (Carter and Gilovich 2012), and can play an important role in the construction of identity (Conway and Pleydell-Pearce 2000; Wilson and Ross 2003). Therefore, our memories of experiences with brands are also part of who we are. Moreover, special experiences are central to our identity and are thus especially important to our self-definitions (Zauberman et al., Chapter 14 in this volume). Research on the construction of self has identified self-narratives as an important way that people

think about who they are (Polkinghorne 1991). The theory of narrative identity postulates that individuals form an identity by integrating their life experiences into an internalized, evolving story of the self that provides the individual with a sense of unity and purpose in life (McAdams 2001). This life narrative integrates one's reconstructed past, perceived present and imagined future into a present identity (Kerby 1991). Some brands may become incorporated into a consumer's life narrative: for example, when a brand plays a critical role in a personal transition (Huffman et al. 2000), or as props or artifacts in the process of identity development (Grayson and Shulman 2000). In this function, brands become incorporated into consumers' narrative identity.

In sum, consumers have experiences with brands. Significant experiences are close to the self and become autobiographical memories that are part of a consumer's sense of self, creating a narrative identity. Brands can remind people of relevant past experiences that led to the development of an identity, help them through life's transitions from one identity to another, connect them to important individuals from their past, and provide a sense of nostalgia. For example, brands associated with life transitions and milestone events such as going to college, getting married or becoming a parent take on identity-related associations (for example, the role of college graduate, spouse or mother) that make these brands especially meaningful. As a result of these processes, experiential SBCs will develop and grow.

EXPERIENTIAL SELF-BRAND CONNECTION SCALE DEVELOPMENT

This section summarizes the process undertaken to develop two subscales to measure two types of SBC: symbolic and experiential, the latter of which is new to this research. First, based on a review of related theory, the experiential SBC concept was defined and differentiated from symbolic-based SBC, as summarized above. Next, we developed a list of potential scale items designed to measure the degree to which consumers have formed an experiential SBC with a particular brand, along with the original seven-item SBC scale believed to measure symbolic connections. A series of exploratory studies in MTurk were run, in order to reduce the set of items and to identify which most validly and reliably measured SBC based on either experiential or symbolic sources.

The basic procedure in these exploratory studies was the same. First, participants were asked to name a brand with which they had either experientially based connections (for example: The brand reminds you of

personal experiences you have had with the brand throughout your life) or symbolically based connections (for example: The brand represents values that can help define us and communicate who we are to others). Next, participants were asked to write one paragraph describing the reasons for their personal bond with the brand, based on either specific experiences and memories (experiential), or values and images of who they are (symbolic). We then asked participants to choose from a series of eight overlapping circles (from no overlap to complete overlap; adapted from Aron et al. 1992) to indicate how connected they felt to the brand. This was followed by a randomized list of potential SBC items (the exact number of items varied across the studies), plus three seven-point items measuring brand attitudes (good/bad, positive/negative, favorable/unfavorable). Two seven-point items served as validation checks (To what extent is your connection to this brand based on: The symbolism (values, image, and associations) this brand represents? or Personal memories and experiences linked to this brand?). Finally, participants answered demographic questions (gender, age, and English as a primary language).

Based on a series of factor analyses on the data from these exploratory studies, we arrived at five symbolic origin SBC items and five experiential origin SBC items (see Table 8.1).¹ Once these scale items were established, we ran an additional study, following the procedure outlined above, including the seven original SBC items (where five items overlap with the symbolic SBC subscale) and the five new experiential SBC items to test the reliability and validity of the two new scales ($N = 75$, after two participants were removed because English was not their primary language, $M_{\text{age}} = 55$, 41 percent female). In looking at the qualitative data from the writing task results, those describing symbolic connections generally wrote about how well the brand's symbolism and personality fit with and/or reflected a desired identity. An example of one participant's description of their symbolic connection to Apple is:

They provide excellent, reliable technology products that I love to use. It shows off that I am into new technology and with the current and most up-to-date trends. I love having my Apple products with me at all time, and enjoy being asked about them. Apple products also convey a laid-back simplicity, which could be used to describe my personality.

The experiential connections appear to be related to nostalgia and memories involving close others and/or specific important episodes in life. An

¹ There were two additional items in the original SBC scale that loaded on both subscales and were therefore dropped: I feel a personal connection to this brand (Not at all/Very much so) and This brand suits me well (Not at all/Extremely well).

Table 8.1 Experiential and symbolic self-brand connections subscales

Experiential SBC	Symbolic SBC
1. I have had positive experiences with this brand. (7 points: Not at all/Extremely well)	1. I can identify with this brand. (7 points: Not at all/Extremely well)
2. I have special personal memories connected to this brand. (7 points: Not at all/Very much so)	2. This brand reflects who I am. (7 points: Not at all/Extremely well)
3. This brand plays a role in my "life story." (7 points: Not at all/Extremely well)	3. I consider this brand to be "me" (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others). (7 points: Not "me"/ "Me")
4. The memories associated with this brand are important to me. (7 points: Not at all/Extremely well)	4. I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people. (7 points: Not at all/Extremely well)
5. This brand reminds me of some of my meaningful experiences. (7 points: Not at all/Extremely well)	5. I think this brand helps me become the type of person I want to be. (7 points: Not at all/Extremely well)

example of one participant's description of his experiential connection to Ovaltine is: "I love buying Ovaltine. It reminds me of my grandmother when I was little. She always had Ovaltine at her house and when I stayed overnight, I always looked forward to drinking Ovaltine with her. Then when my kids were small, they loved drinking Ovaltine also."

Analyzing the quantitative scale data, factor analysis revealed two factors, as shown in Table 8.2.² As expected, these two scales are correlated with one another ($r = 0.51$, $p < 0.001$), as well as with brand attitudes (experiential SBC $r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$; symbolic SBC $r = 0.37$, $p < 0.001$). Both SBC scales are significantly correlated with the overlapping circles measure (experiential SBC $r = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$; symbolic SBC $r = 0.54$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that each type of SBC is connected to the self. Finally, in terms of the two validation check items, each type of SBC was more highly correlated with its corresponding basis, compared to the alternative (experiential SBC with experiential basis $r = 0.72$, $p < .001$ vs. symbolic basis $r = 0.18$, *ns*; symbolic SBC with symbolic basis $r = 0.70$, $p < 0.001$ vs. experiential basis $r = 0.22$, $p < 0.06$). Confirmatory factor analysis also provides evidence of scale validity, as seen in Figure 8.1.³

² Two items from the original SBC scale (Suits me well and Personal connection) loaded above 0.50 on both factors and were therefore not included in either scale.

³ Confirmatory factor analysis also reveals evidence of discriminatory validity: experiential SBC and symbolic SBC are distinct constructs from brand attitudes. Modeling the five

Table 8.2 Factor analysis results

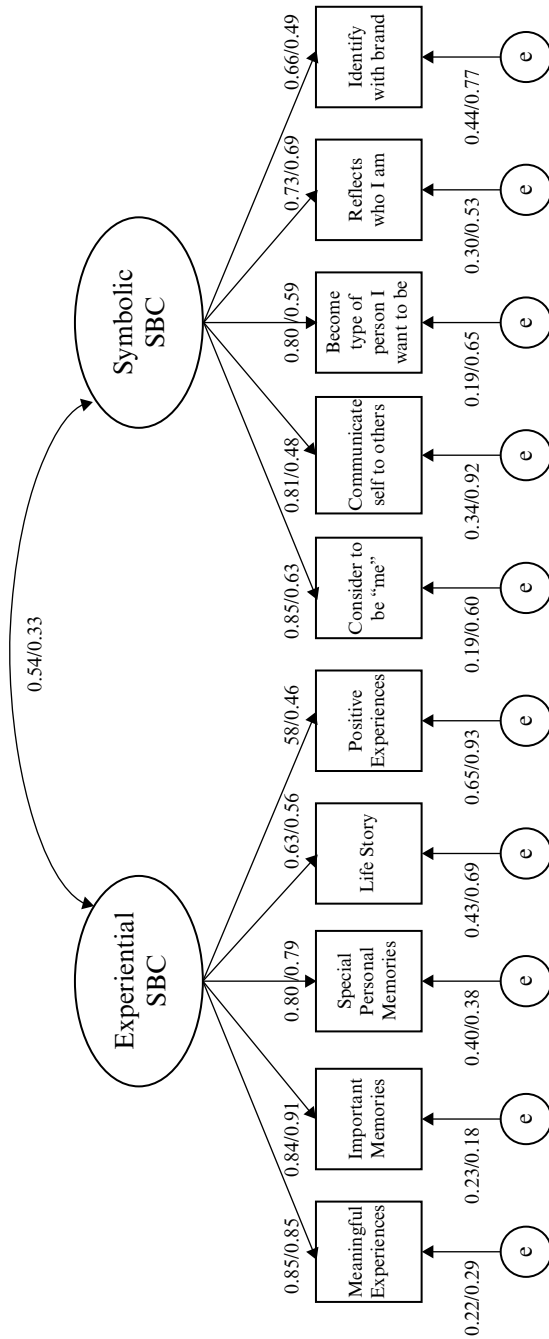
Factor	Experiential SBC	Symbolic SBC
Eigenvalue	6.24	1.56
Average variance extracted	0.60	0.56
Cronbach's alpha	0.91	0.89
This brand reminds me of some of my meaningful experiences	0.85	
The memories associated with this brand are important to me	0.84	
I have special personal memories connected to this brand	0.80	
This brand plays a role in my "life story"	0.63	
I have had positive experiences with this brand	0.58	
I consider this brand to be "me" (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others)		0.85
I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people		0.81
I think this brand helps me become the type of person I want to be		0.80
This brand reflects who I am		0.73
I can identify with this brand		0.66

Note: Extraction Method: Iterated Principal Factor Analysis, Rotation Method: Varimax, Rotation converged in seven iterations, Loadings < 0.49 (or items loading on both factors) are not displayed.

Scale Validity Study

A follow-on study was designed to provide additional evidence of the validity and reliability of the experiential and symbolic SBC subscales. The basic procedure was similar to the exploratory studies described above, except that here, participants first chose between two popular brands in our previous studies (Apple or Nike) as the brand they felt more connected to, to control extraneous brand confounds. Fifty-three participants did not

experiential SBC items, five symbolic SBC items, and three brand attitude items ($\alpha = 0.88$) as measuring three underlying constructs fits the data well ($\chi^2(60) = 149.59$, $p < 0.001$, due to this test statistic's sensitivity to sample size; CFI = 0.87, GFI = 0.76, and SRMR = 0.10) and the factor loadings for each item on its corresponding scale are significant ($r_s > 0.81$, $t_s > 6.68$).



SDS: $\chi^2(33) = 84.31, p < 0.001$ (due to sample size), CFI = 0.90, GFI = 0.81, SRMR = 0.09; superior to single factor model, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(2) = 128.56, p < 0.001$
SVS: $\chi^2(33) = 55.01, p < 0.001$ (due to sample size), CFI = 0.93, GFI = 0.91, SRMR = 0.07; superior to single factor model, $\chi^2_{\text{diff}}(2) = 59.57, p < 0.001$

Figure 8.1 CFS results from scale development study (SDS) and scale validity study (SVS)

feel connected to either brand and were eliminated, along with four participants because English was not their primary language, for a final $N = 111$ ($M_{\text{age}} = 40$, 51 percent female). In addition to the measures described above, a dichotomous choice variable was included, asking whether the consumer's connection was based primarily on symbolic brand image or personal experiences with the brand.

As expected, the symbolic ($\alpha = 0.90$) and experiential ($\alpha = 0.80$) SBC subscales are correlated with one another ($r = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$). Both SBC scales are significantly correlated with the overlapping circles measure (experiential SBC $r = 0.23$, $p = 0.01$; symbolic SBC $r = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), thus each represents a connection to the self. Each type of SBC was more highly correlated with its corresponding basis, compared to the alternative (experiential SBC with experiential basis $r = 0.63$, $p < 0.001$ vs. symbolic basis $r = 0.09$, ns ; symbolic SBC with symbolic basis $r = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$ vs. experiential basis $r = 0.15$, $p = 0.10$). For the choice task, when participants indicated that their connection was primarily symbolic in nature, symbolic SBCs were significantly higher than experiential SBCs (symbolic = 4.94, experiential = 4.65, $F(1, 110) = 4.01$, $p < 0.05$). Conversely, when participants indicated that their connection was primarily based on experiences with the brand, experiential SBCs were higher than symbolic SBCs (experiential = 5.48, symbolic = 5.14, $F(1, 110) = 4.01$, $p = 0.07$). Confirmatory factor analysis also provides evidence of validity, also shown in Figure 8.1. In sum, we believe that our two five-item subscales measuring symbolic and experiential SBC reliably and validly capture these two constructs.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is our hope that future research can investigate the implications of these two bases of SBC, because a significant number of interesting differences are likely to exist. Even though much of the SBC research has involved renowned and identity-laden brands, SBC are not only relevant for “prestige” brands. SBCs are prevalent across a host of different brands, even mundane ones such as Tide (Brick et al. 2012). Our studies here revealed that people connect to brands ranging from Tiffany's to Walmart, from Prada to Zara. One fruitful area for future research is to explore degree of brand prestige across different types of SBC (experiential versus symbolic). One speculation might be that connections to mundane brands often tend to be of a more experiential nature, formed upon autobiographical memories of past interactions with the brand. Connections to prestige brands, however, might be more of a symbolic nature, formed to signal a desired identity to others.

Past research has found that individuals with strong SBCs are loyal customers who are willing to pay higher prices to purchase the brand's products (Thomson et al. 2005) as well as to promote and advocate for the brand (Park et al. 2010). We wonder whether these positive marketing consequences are equally strong across experiential versus symbolic SBCs. For example, given that symbolically based SBCs are used for self-communication, while those based on experiential memories are more personal, perhaps brand promotion and advocacy behaviors are more likely to be augmented for symbolically based SBCs.

A great deal of research on consumer behavior uses the self-threat paradigm where researchers threaten an aspect of self-identity to investigate how consumers engage in restorative behavior (Spangenberg and Angle, Chapter 13 in this volume). We could imagine that in response to a self-threat, consumers with SBCs based on symbolic origins would show more compensatory consumption, as consumers attempt to reassert their self-identity along symbolic dimensions. On the other hand, experientially based SBCs might be used to bolster memories in the face of a loss, such as the death of a friend or family member, the loss of one's home, the disruption of an important relationship, or in response to mortality salience.

Gaustad et al. (2018) find that consumers with high SBCs tend to respond negatively to changes in the brand. Extending from this, we believe that symbolic SBCs are likely to be more sensitive to brand personality or meaning changes, while experiential SBCs are likely to react more strongly to changes in brand experience factors. For example, if a restaurant changes its menu items or decor, consumers with a high experientially based SBC are likely to feel threatened or dissatisfied. On the other hand, if the same restaurant were to change the status (for example, lowering prices to appeal to a wider audience) or *raison d'être* (for example, abandoning a commitment to organic, locally sourced ingredients), consumers with a high symbolically based SBC might be more likely to be upset by the change.

Research has shown that consumers with high SBCs are willing to defend the brand in the face of failure and even user-generated accidents (Cheng et al. 2011; Gaustad et al. forthcoming). Is this equally true for SBCs based on both experiential and symbolic origins? The extant conceptualizations assert that brand failures threaten the self for those with high SBCs. Thus, one might imagine that differences may emerge based on the nature of the failure. For example, consumers with a high experiential SBC may find a failure or accident related to the product's performance to be more threatening, while consumers with a high symbolic SBC may find a failure or accident related to the brand's values, personality or status to be more threatening. In each case, the more threatening failure should evoke more defense of the brand.

There are also interesting implications for consumer responses to brand extensions. On the one hand, consumers with high experiential SBCs will likely be open to brand extensions, as long as the extension does not threaten to invalidate or contradict the memories upon which these SBCs are based. For example, when Cheerios adds a new flavor to its cereal line-up, it is unlikely to threaten the core memories of consumers whose SBCs are based on enjoyable childhood consumption memories. On the other hand, for consumers with high symbolic SBCs, brand extensions will be evaluated based on how they affect what the brand means and communicates about the brand's users. The classic backlash of Porsche owners when Porsche first introduced sports utility vehicles (SUVs) could be an example of consumers who used the racy sports car image of Porsche as part of their identity-related strategies (Avery 2012).

Brand usage is one way that individuals can signal a self-group identity, whether it be a small reference group, a larger group that indicates category belonging, or a large social collective. However, dissimilar groups' use of the same brand can decrease its efficacy as an identity marker and induce a threat to self-identity (see Simpson et al., Chapter 11 in this volume; Spangenberg and Angle, Chapter 13 in this volume). We believe that such threats may have different implications for experiential and symbolic SBCs. Prior research has found that consumers avoid and abandon products in order to distance themselves from dissimilar reference groups that use the product (Berger and Heath 2007; White and Dahl 2006). However, recent research has shown that consumers with high SBCs are more likely to upgrade to limited editions or new collections that are not widely available in order to distance themselves from dissimilar users and achieve higher brand user status (Wang and John 2019). We would expect that this reaction would be much more likely to occur for consumers with symbolic SBCs, compared to those based on idiosyncratic brand experiences.

This logic extends to differences due to unknown individual referents, such as celebrity endorsers and social media influencers, as well as abstract referents, such as fictitious characters, because these endorsements and associations encapsulate significant symbolic meaning. As consumers construct their identities using brands, they appropriate the symbolic meanings of brands which may be derived from associations with celebrities (Miller and Allen 2012) and fictional characters. Given the inherently symbolic nature of these associations, we would expect that the selection of a new brand ambassador, a change in status for an existing endorser, or a promotional product placement with a new character to have the highest impact, potentially either good or bad, on consumers whose SBCs are based on symbolism, relative to those based on experiences.

It would also be interesting to investigate the development process for

experiential and symbolic SBCs. We believe that experiential SBCs may be more stable and long-lasting, compared to symbolic SBCs, which might shift as people go through different phases in life. For example, childhood memories of one's mother serving Cheerios for breakfast will always be a part of one's autobiographical memories, while the specific brands signaling one's desired identity might change as one's identity evolves. Furthermore, symbolic SBCs that endure over time might eventually be infused with experiential ties as well, as experiences and memories linked to the brand become important to an identity. However, it may be less likely for experiential SBCs to become increasingly symbolic over time.

Finally, there may be differences in the extent to which consumers use symbolic versus experiential SBCs to create and signal social roles compared to personal identification with well-known individuals. Symbolic SBCs may be more likely to be used to signal patterns of consistent behaviors associated with social roles, such as mother or professor, which are more abstract and more widely understood by society. Alternatively, experiential SBCs may be more likely to be used to identify with actual individuals who the consumer knows and wishes to maintain a self-defining relationship with, such as a mentor, advisor or aspirational close friend. Here, ties to the important individual are likely to encapsulate memories of specific, shared experiences.

In conclusion, we find the distinction between SBCs that arises due to symbolic versus experiential origins to be theoretically interesting. We also hope that these two constructs will prove fruitful for inspiring future consumer identity research.

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9. Ownership and identity: a cognitive perspective

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The self-concept consists of multiple selves that coexist in a sophisticated cognitive structure (McConnell and Strain 2007). The self-concept does not only include our current self-view, but also includes cognitive components of hopes, desires and goals for the future, as well as past selves that guide our perception and understanding of the current environment. It is also comprised of various identities, or category labels that “a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment” (Reed et al. 2012, p.312). These identities include one’s social identities that arise from group memberships (for example, a professor, a reader) and one’s individual identities (for example, one’s traits such as being intelligent). Prior research has conceptualized these different self-aspects as a hierarchy with overlapping content in terms of traits (for example, being intelligent is a trait of both a professor and a reader; McConnell 2011). Different self-aspects are activated depending on the context. The activated self then influences our perceptions, judgments and behaviors. Activation at any level of the hierarchy spreads through the associative network that represents self-knowledge. When different selves conflict with each other, it can result in self-dilemma and even self-distortion (Markus and Nurius 1986). Under this view, one’s chronic self may reflect those selves that have been activated most frequently and recently.

In this chapter, we aim to broaden the self-concept construct by introducing the notion of a material, product-based identity as an addition to the widely studied social and individual identities. We first discuss how possessions integrate into the life of a consumer and can have profound consequences for their self-concept. We then examine two implications of the self-product connection: first the ways this connection affects consumer judgments and behavior that are relevant to this connection, and then the

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ways it affects consumer judgments and behavior that are irrelevant to this connection. More specifically, we first review our research on egocentric categorization theory to shed light on when and how the material environment affects judgment and decisions about the self and vice versa (that is, when and how the self affects judgment and decisions about material objects) (Weiss and Johar 2013, 2016, 2018). We then describe a specific way in which the process of egocentric categorization, whereby people construe the self in terms of objects, may manifest itself through various consumer identities. We next review our conceptualization of the “see-saw self.” We discuss how activation of one self-aspect results in deactivation of unrelated and conflicting self-aspect. This conceptualization highlights costs to self-aspect activation: rather than simply facilitating related judgments and behavior as shown in past research, activating a self-aspect can impair unrelated judgments and behaviors (Chung and Johar 2018). This pattern of deactivation and activation results in impaired performance on product-unrelated tasks and facilitation on product-related tasks.

Our conceptual model is built on the principle of identity association that states: “when stimuli become associated with a positively regarded identity, those stimuli . . . can acquire other identity-related content independent of any explicit processing of the association” (Reed et al. 2012). Importantly, we extend this principle by proposing that: (1) the effects occur for both positive and negative identities; (2) in addition to stimuli acquiring identity-related content, one’s identity perceptions can also be shifted based on the salience of owned versus unowned stimuli; and (3) stimuli or products can serve to activate related identities but also simultaneously deactivate other identities. We conclude the chapter by describing the contributions of our view of the self, and delineate areas for future research.

POSSESSIONS AND THE CONSUMER SELF

There can be no argument with the notion that consumers increasingly use products and brands to define the self. Reed et al. (2012, p. 315) discuss the identity relevance principle and note that “stimuli often become linked to identities,” and influential research on possession attachment (Belk 1988) has found that possessions become connected to their owner’s “self” over time. These possessions acquire personal meanings (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Rochberg-Halton 1984) and result in emotional attachment (Ahuvia 2005; Kleine et al. 1995). Consumers choose products to highlight their value system (for example, wearing a cross for religious symbolism), to represent a desired self-view (for example, using Apple

products to be seen as “hip”), or to communicate their beliefs and various social affiliations (Reed and Forehand 2016; Wu et al. 2011). Possessions also serve to amplify a positive self-image within the context of one’s identity (Beauregard and Dunning 2001; Sirgy 1982).

Previous research on the various consequences of product ownership has studied the effects of legal ownership as well as the effects of mere psychological ownership. Legal ownership is recognized by society and gives an individual the right to possess a product with legal protection (Pierce et al. 2003). From a number of legally owned products, some products are more likely to be integrated with the self (Kleine et al. 1995). These products tend to be more symbolic (for example, uniform, car), more likely to convey salient self-meanings, and have important roles in defining the self (Berger and Heath 2008). Notably, it has been widely established that people can experience psychological ownership without legally owning a product (Furby 1991; Pierce et al. 2003). For example, research has shown that mere touch or mental imagery of a product is enough to increase feelings of ownership (Peck and Shu 2009). Employees can also experience a feeling of ownership at their workplace (Pierce et al. 2001). These examples suggest that legal ownership for a product is not required for eliciting a feeling that this product is “mine.” A feeling of psychological ownership (without legal ownership) is sufficient to enhance the connection between a product and the self, such that product characteristics transfer and constitute an important part of one’s self-identity (Pierce et al. 2003; Pierce et al. 2001; Turk et al. 2011; Weiss and Johar 2013).

While the research cited above has examined the impact of possessions on the self-concept using a mostly motivational lens, our research has examined the possession–self link using a cognitive lens. The next section describes the tenets of egocentric categorization theory and some of its implication for product judgment and consumer choice.

EGOCENTRIC CATEGORIZATION THEORY

Social categorization theory asserts that people mentally construe the self in terms of other persons, classifying the various persons in their environment relative to the social-self, as “us” or “them.” Egocentric categorization theory (ECT) (Weiss and Johar 2013, 2016) suggests that people also mentally represent the self in terms of objects, classifying the various objects in their environment relative to the personal-self, as “me” or “not-me.” Our research has established that, when people feel ownership over a product, it systematically changes the way they mentally represent that product and also changes the way they mentally construe the self. People

classify as “me” objects over which they feel ownership, but classify as “not-me” other objects, over which these people do not feel ownership.

Drawing on various categorization theories, we have derived hypotheses about objects that consumers classify as intrinsic or extrinsic to the category “self.” We predicted and found that once a product is classified as “self,” the consumer may intuitively draw upon information about both the product and the self to judge either the product or the self. Consequently, judgments about that product as well as judgments about the self will tend to converge (or assimilate to one another). For example, as soon as consumers receive a less (versus more) creative product as a gift, and therefore categorize that product in the self, they tend to judge themselves as less creative. Relatedly, as soon as less (versus more) creative consumers receive a product as a gift, and therefore categorize that product in the self, these consumers tend to judge that product as less creative. Notably, this pattern of findings extends the scope of the “identity association principle” (Reed et al. 2012), which predicts more positive evaluations to products that become associated to a positive aspect of the self, in two ways. Adding to this principle, we suggest and find a similar pattern in the negative domain, specifically more negative evaluations for products that become associated with negative aspects of the self (for example, low creativity). Moreover, we suggest and find that the transfer of association is not merely one-sided. Specifically, this transfer of associations may go not only from the consumer to the product (as the association principle explicitly suggests), but also the other way, namely from the product to the consumer.

Assimilation is not expected in situations where the product is classified as extrinsic to the category of self. Specifically, if the self is the target of judgment, this product would often serve as the standard by which the self is judged, and vice versa (that is, if this product were the target of judgment, the self would serve as a standard by which this product is judged). Consequently, judgments about this product and judgments about the self tend to diverge (or contrast from one another). For example, consumers who become cognizant of not owning a less (versus more) creative product, and therefore categorize that product as being outside of the self, will judge themselves as more creative. These consumers may intuitively feel that their own personal creativity is high, when compared to the low creativity standard set by this uncreative product. Relatedly, less (versus more) creative consumers, who become cognizant of not owning a product and therefore classify that product as “not-self,” will judge that product as more creative. These consumers may spontaneously feel that the product’s creativity is high, relative to the low creativity standard set by their own personal low creativity.

These results are obtained even following random assignment of prod-

uct ownership, suggesting that motivation is not needed for owned objects to influence self-views (or for self-views to influence object evaluation). In other words, receiving gifts from friends, prizes from radio programs, giveaways from manufacturers, or inherited objects from relatives can also result in a transfer of product traits to the self as well as transfer of self-traits to the product (Huang et al. 2009). The notion that the categorization of objects as intrinsic or extrinsic to the self underlies assimilation or contrast judgments is supported by the finding that classification of a product as more (less) part-of-the-self (for example, following product ownership versus its absence) predicts stronger assimilation (contrast) effects.

ECT was strengthened by the introduction of the “mine-me sensitivity” individual difference variable. This variable captures variance in the extent to which individuals are prone to categorize objects relative to the self, based on whether these individuals own these objects. High mine-me sensitivity reflects the extent to which people perceive “mine” as “me,” and “not mine” as “not me.” Weiss and Johar (2013) developed a measure of mine-me sensitivity and showed that assimilation and contrast judgments are more likely to ensue for those who are high on mine-me sensitivity. People who are low on mine-me sensitivity do not differentiate between owned and unowned goods in terms of whether they are “me”; both owned and unowned objects may be viewed as very much part of the self, or both may be viewed as not at all part of the self. In these cases, owned products are not categorized any differently from unowned products and no downstream consequences of ownership are expected. This is exactly what we found.

Our research has established that people tend to engage in egocentric categorization when thoughts or feelings about “ownership” are contextually induced (for example, during online or in-store shopping, gift-giving or receiving; Weiss and Johar 2013, 2016). We found the predicted assimilation and contrast effects when people felt ownership over goods or were cognizant of not owning these goods, but not when people neither felt ownership of, nor were cognizant of not owning, a good. In such situations, where the construal of the self in terms of objects was not contextually evoked, product ownership no longer predicted product judgment (Weiss and Johar 2013, study 4) and consumer choice (Weiss and Johar 2016, study 2).

Construing the Self in Terms of Objects and Consumer Identity

What does it mean to construe the self in terms of objects (cf. Reed et al. 2012, p.314, Figure 3)? We propose that certain types of consumer

identities – specifically, those identities that involve consumers’ professions or hobbies (for example, cyclist, wood worker) – can reflect a mental representation or construal of the self in terms of objects. To explain this proposition, consider the range of identities that consumers may take on (or use) in a given situation. A person may construe “self” along affiliations, “an American” or “a female”; along relationships, “a husband” or “a friend”; and along professions and hobbies, “a fisherman” or “a cyclist.” Notably, of these three ways to construe “self”, the first two are arguably more consistent with a self-construal in terms of others, people or groups (Brewer and Weber 1994), whereas the third is consistent with self-construal in terms of objects (Solomon 1983). To exemplify, “an American” is essentially a person perceiving the group “Americans” as “self” and the group “non-Americans” as “not-self”; “a husband” is a person perceiving his wife as “self” and other people as “not-self”; whereas “a fisherman” is a person perceiving his fishing rod as “self” and objects that are unrelated to fishing as “not-self.”

It is possible that self-representation in terms of affiliations and relationships might also be supported by objects (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988), such as the Statue of Liberty for Americans and wedding rings for husbands. Further, self-representation in terms of hobbies or professions can also be supported by people or groups (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), such as fishing partners or associations. However, groups and other people are arguably more essential for defining affiliations and relations: a person can construe “self” as “an American” without the Statue of Liberty, or as “a husband” without a wedding ring, but cannot do so respectively without the group “Americans” or without his partner. Similarly, objects can be viewed as being more pivotal in defining hobbies and professions: a person can think of themselves as “a fisherman” without fishing partners or associations, but not so much without their fishing equipment.

Based on this conceptualization, we predicted that inducing consumers to construe the self in terms of objects (by activating ownership-related thoughts) would increase the tendency of these consumers to think of themselves in terms of identities that utilize (or rely upon) these objects; specifically, identities that reflect hobbies or professions. In an original study that tested this prediction, 213 MTurk participants responded to an open-ended task in which they described themselves in 20 different ways by completing an “I am . . .” statement (the Twenty Statement Task; Kuhn and McPartland 1954). The concept of “ownership” was initially made salient for half of the participants (Weiss and Johar 2013). The frequency of object-supported identities, hobbies and professions, in the self-descriptions of these participants served as the dependent variable.

A review of participants’ input in the Twenty Statement Task revealed

five categories of self-descriptions. These categories included affiliations (for example, American, male, southerner, student, white, $M = 1.15$), relations to family and friends (for example, father, mother, friend, lover, $M = 1.51$), self-assessments/states (for example, tall, funny, hard-working, sensitive, tired, hungry, $M = 14.38$), actions (for example, going on vacation, drinking coffee, on the computer, $M = 0.88$) and hobbies and professions (for example, golfer, pet lover/owner, cook, carpenter, biologist, geographer, $M = 1.78$). Two coders (95 percent agreement) then coded the data along these categories, with a sixth option to choose “other” if none of these categories applied (selected only for ~1 percent of the self-descriptions). Consistent with our prediction, a t-test showed that evoking (versus not evoking) “ownership” thoughts and feelings increased the tendency of participants to describe the self along object-supported identities, specifically hobbies or professions ($M_{ownership} = 2.26$ versus $M_{control} = 1.23$, $t(213) = 2.89$, $p = 0.004$) (see Table 9.1). While variables such as gender and age were significant for some of the categories, including them in the analysis did not change the results.

Thus, the same contextual factor that has been shown to foster egocentric categorization processes (that is, prompting versus not prompting people to think about ownership) also increased the tendency of participants to describe themselves in terms of their hobbies and professions. The possibility that certain consumer identities (for example, hobbies and professions) are conducive to egocentric categorization processes suggests that the range of situations in which the material environment of a consumer is likely to affect this consumer’s judgments and decisions about the self is broader than initially expected. Specifically, consumers may engage in egocentric categorization processes not only when ownership thoughts or feelings come to mind, but also during other situations that foster the construal of the self in terms of objects, such as while golfing, cycling or

Table 9.1 Frequency of describing the self in terms of each identity

Ownership is primed	The frequency of describing the self in terms of . . .					Total
	Hobbies and Affiliations professions	Relations	Self- assessments	Actions		
No	1.29	1.25	1.42	14.75	0.90	19.62
Yes	2.26	1.06	1.60	14.01	0.86	19.79
<i>p</i> value	0.004	0.34	0.49	0.24	0.9	0.19

Note: The sum of descriptions does not add to 20 due to the presence of self-descriptions that the coders were not able to assign to one of the above categories.

during other situations in which consumers engage in their hobbies or professions.

COSTS OF SELF-ASPECT ACTIVATION: THE SEE-SAW SELF

Egocentric categorization theory views the relationship between possessions and the self using a cognitive lens. This theory is consistent with the idea that product ownership activates an identity, which leads to judgments and behaviors that are compatible with that self-identity. The facilitative effects of identity activation are consistent with the principle of identity relevance that states “when identity information is deliberately processed, its influence will be greatest on stimuli that possess object relevance” (Reed et al. 2012). However, research on the self has been silent in terms of the effect of product ownership on non-activated identities, and has assumed that non-activated identities remain at some baseline level of activation. Our conceptualization of the “see-saw self” addresses this issue, and finds that activating one identity by making ownership of an object salient can simultaneously deactivate (or suppress) unrelated identities. The literature on multiple identities has acknowledged the notion of identity suppression but has taken a mostly motivational view, suggesting that individuals explicitly suppress certain identities (Reed and Forehand 2016). We extend this argument by proposing that identity activation can itself result in spontaneous suppression of other identities. We describe our see-saw self model below, and then describe the results of a study that tested the scope and the strength of the proposed deactivation effects.

The idea that product ownership can improve consumers’ performance in product-related domains by activating the product-related identity is consistent with prior research (Coleman and Williams 2013; Reed et al. 2012; Weiss and Johar 2013; Wheeler et al. 2007). For example, undergraduate participants in the United States who used an Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) pen were likely to perform better on a Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) test than those who used a Pilot pen, and this product-self assimilation was stronger among entity theorists who used the product to bolster their perceptions of their fixed ability (Park and John 2014). We propose a novel by-product of such activation. We suggest that activating one’s product-related identity (through salience of product ownership) is likely to simultaneously deactivate product-unrelated identities and, hence, impair consumers’ performance in product-unrelated domains. We base our proposition on research suggesting that activation of one aspect of the identity can lead to a momentary deactivation of

other aspects of the identity (Bodenhausen et al. 2003; Hodges and Park 2013; Zhang et al. 2013). This occurs because people want to behave in a coherent and situationally appropriate manner, resulting in the active inhibition of identities that make the self-view less cohesive (Hugenberg and Bodenhausen 2004; Macrae et al. 1995; Neill 1977). Inhibiting other self-views is beneficial because it helps to maintain a coherent and stable self (Bodenhausen et al. 2003).

A small but growing stream of research suggests that the dominant self-view suppresses other self-views (Macrae et al. 1995). Non-dominant self-views do not passively decay, but are actively inhibited. Initial evidence suggests that people suppress conflicting self-views. For example, when fraternity/sorority members were reminded of their “Greek” identity, they mentally deactivated their self-view as university students below the baseline (Hugenberg and Bodenhausen 2004). When Chinese Americans had their Chinese identity activated by seeing the face of another Chinese (versus Caucasian) person, they suppressed their American identity, as revealed in their impaired fluency in English (Zhang et al. 2013). Similarly, Asian American women performed better on a mathematics test when their Asian identity was activated, but not when their gender identity was activated (Shih et al. 1999; see also Gibson et al. 2014; Moon and Roeder 2014). Activation of one identity leading to deactivation of a different identity may seem relatively intuitive for conflicting identities, because activation of one identity automatically implies suppressing a conflicting identity. This is the case in the findings cited above. In fact, the Shih et al. (1999) finding may simply reflect behavior that is consistent with the activated stereotype.

The literature also provides some evidence for deactivation of identities unrelated to the currently active identity (Kettle and Häubl 2011; Macrae et al. 1995; Winterich and Barone 2011). For instance, when lab participants were reminded (versus not reminded) of their student identity (activation of student identity), they were more engaged in an identity-congruent camera shopping task. Interestingly, participants who were reminded (versus not reminded) of their student identity were also less engaged in an identity-unrelated dishwasher shopping task (Kettle and Häubl 2011). Another study found that participants experienced facilitation on a lexical decision task for words related to the activated identity, but also experienced inhibition for words related to a different identity, compared to participants whose identity was not activated (Macrae et al. 1995). These findings are consistent with research in social cognition which suggests that the activation of a target representation benefits when inhibitory mechanisms suppress interfering alternatives (Neill 1977).

Our own program of research has established the see-saw self model

(Chung and Johar 2018). A set of studies has established that product-related aspects of the self are activated when product ownership is salient, regardless of whether ownership is psychological or legal. We consistently reveal that salient product ownership (for example, owning a calculator) results in performance enhancement on a product-related task (for example, math task) but results in impairment on product-unrelated tasks (for example, art task). Importantly, the two task contents are exactly the same and only the task label (math versus art) is different. This helps to rule out content-based explanations for the effect; in other words, it is not accessibility of math-related content that facilitates performance.

Several studies reported in Chung and Johar (2018) establish the mediating mechanism: namely, that ownership salience activates related self-identities and deactivates other self-identities. These include measuring performance on a word completion task (Johnson and Lord 2010; Knowles and Gardner 2008; Vargas et al. 2007) and a cognitive accessibility task (Chugani et al. 2015)). Our findings support our conceptual model on identity (de)activation. These studies utilize multiple ownership manipulations using different product categories such as IKEA designer products, calculators, art pieces and earphones, and across diverse performance tasks such as price comparison, anagrams and IQ tests. Differential performance on these tasks does not appear to be motivated by a desire to do better on activated-self relevant tasks because self-reported levels of effort and involvement do not differ across conditions.

An alternative perspective on why feelings of ownership may influence performance on product-related and unrelated tasks is that the ownership salience simply primes product-related goals and deactivates other goals. To tease apart these two potential mechanisms, we utilize the construct of “self-concept clarity.” Self-concept clarity (SCC) is defined as the extent to which a person’s self-concept is clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent and temporarily stable (Campbell et al. 1996; Morrison and Wheeler 2010). People who have low self-concept clarity hold uncertain, unstable and inconsistent self-views that differ from time to time. If our effects are driven by the activation and deactivation of different aspects of one’s identity rather than goal-priming, ownership-induced effects on identity and task performance should be attenuated under high self-concept clarity conditions. This is because individuals with high self-concept clarity have stable self-concepts, and cues such as feelings of product ownership are less likely to activate and deactivate different identities. This is exactly what we found (Chung and Johar 2018).

We next present the results of a new study that examines the limits to the deactivation effect and addresses the question of whether all conflicting and unrelated identities are deactivated when a particular identity is activated.

Empirical Evidence for Limits to Self-(De)activation

This study uses an idiographic approach to examine the scope of deactivation based on each participant's perceptions of identities that are important to them, as well as their perceived correlations between these identities. The first part of the study, conducted one week prior to the main experiment, measured each participant's chronic activation level of five target identities. Specifically, 52 MTurk participants ranked a list of five identities (identity related to math, art, music, being an athlete, being a writer) in the order of importance to them. These five identities are associated with basic disciplines in most primary and secondary United States schools. Next, participants responded to "part-of-self" (POS) questions for the five identities as baseline measures of identity activation (Weiss and Johar 2013, 2016).

One week later, the same participants responded to POS scales for each of the five identities, one of which was activated via an ownership manipulation. For each participant, we manipulated their feelings of ownership over a product that they had personally ranked as being moderately important (that is, 3rd of five ranked identities) on the first survey. For instance, an individual who ranked an athletic-identity as third in terms of importance described an athletic product that they owned. Each participant engaged in the owned product description task related to the identity that they had ranked third. Then all participants responded to the identical POS questions as those from a week ago. Finally, participants rated their perceptions of how the five identity skill sets were correlated with each other.

We predicted that the POS score would increase for the activated identity (that is, the 3rd-ranked identity), whereas the POS scores would generally decrease for the remaining four identities that were not activated (especially if they were negatively correlated or unrelated to the activated identity). To test this idea, we first calculated the POS_{change} score ($POS_{after} - POS_{before}$) for the activated identity, and then compared this score with the average of the four other POS_{change} scores (for example, "POS_{change for athletic identity}" versus "average POS_{change for other 4 identities}"). As expected, the four identities were relatively deactivated compared to the activated 3rd-ranked identity ($M_{pos\ change\ for\ the\ activated\ identity} = 0.54$ versus $M_{pos\ average\ change\ for\ 4\ identities} = -0.21$; $t(51) = -3.00$, $p = 0.004$). This average change score, however, masks potential deactivation (that is, a negative change score significantly below zero) because some of the four identities are positively correlated with the target activated identity and, hence, are not expected to show deactivation. We therefore examined deactivation of each of the four identities separately, based on their individual-level correlations with the activated identity.

Further analysis revealed that identities that are positively correlated with the activated identity are less likely to be deactivated, whereas identities that are negatively correlated with or unrelated to the activated identity are more likely to be deactivated. Paired t-tests revealed that the $POS_{\text{change of identities with correlation } -10 \text{ to } 1}$ ($M = -0.38$) was significantly lower than the $POS_{\text{change of activated identity}}$ ($M = 0.49$; $t(48), p = 0.003^1$). This score ($M = -0.38$) was also significantly below zero ($t(48) = -2.28, p = 0.027$). For identities with correlation 2 or higher, the $POS_{\text{change of identities with correlation } 2 \text{ to } 10}$ ($M = -0.21$) was also significantly lower than $POS_{\text{change of activated identity}}$ ($M = 0.51$; $t(42) = -2.53, p = 0.015$), suggesting relative deactivation compared to the target identity, but this score ($M = -0.21$) was not significantly different from zero ($t(42) = -1.14, p = 0.262$).

It appears that identity activation of a somewhat important identity leads to relative deactivation of other important identities that are perceived to be unrelated or negatively related to the activated identity. Note that our explicit POS measure reflects participants' conscious perceptions of the centrality of different identities to their self-concept, although it is unlikely that participants consciously de-prioritized aspects of identity unrelated to owned products made salient (note that the initial POS measures were taken a week in advance). This study suggests that the only limit to deactivation is a perception that the other identity is positively related to the activated identity. These findings relate to the processes of elevation and suppression described by Reed and Forehand (2016), and raise the question of how many identities can be simultaneously held as part of one's self-schema in memory.

CONTRIBUTION

Our research demonstrates that individuals categorize owned objects in the category of self, but classify unowned objects as extrinsic to this category. This egocentric categorization fosters a perceived convergence (or assimilation) between the traits of a person and the traits of the products they own; it also engenders a perceived divergence (or contrast) between the traits of a person and the traits of products they do not own. Such effects are mainly expected in contexts that bring to mind thoughts about ownership (for example, online or in-store shopping), but may also ensue

¹ Note the different total N and means for the activated identity from the initial analysis. This is due to the fact that we had to exclude participants who indicated that their activated identities and the remaining four identities were all positively correlated (that is, correlation score of 2 or higher).

when a person uses an identity that involves construing the self in terms of objects, such as one's hobby and profession. The categorization process that drives these effects is more likely for consumers with high levels of mine-me sensitivity. Assimilation and contrast effects are observed regardless of whether the consumer chose to obtain ownership over the product or such ownership was endogenously imposed (for example, by a gift-giver or a marketer). Thus, egocentric categorization theory offers new insights into the role of material objects in self-judgment and the role of the self in product judgment.

Our findings document trait-specific effects on how people perceive their own tallness, sincerity or body weight based on objects they own or do not own (Weiss and Johar 2016). At the same time, these effects generalize to predict overall physical self-esteem, cheating behavior and self-assessed physical attractiveness. These results suggest that the assimilation effects are spontaneous, such that trait judgments and overall evaluations are affected even in the absence of elicitation. Egocentric categorization theory is well positioned to begin bridging two bodies of research that have been conducted separately, namely one on self-judgments and the other on product-judgments.

Notably, ECT focuses on the various consequences of product ownership for product-relevant domains and does not make predictions for product-irrelevant domains. Relatedly, prior research has assumed that activating an identity is costless and does not have consequences for other identities. Our see-saw self model establishes that the self has limits, and unrelated and conflicting identities are likely to be deactivated when a particular identity is activated via ownership salience. Simply priming certain objects does not result in identity activation, as we establish in the non-ownership conditions in our experiments (Chung and Johar 2018). This model has implications for task performance; consistent with prior work, activated identities facilitate related tasks. However, at the same time, activated identities result in impairment in unrelated tasks. As with egocentric categorization theory, motivational forces such as commitment to identity-related goals can exacerbate our effects.

Our findings have implications for a variety of judgments and behaviors. As an extension of our findings on product-related performance, consider potential effects of identity activation on survey responses and choice. In the political realm, a voter may have multiple relevant identities such as being a woman and being a Democrat. If her gender identity is activated, then she is more likely to behave consistently with this identity, including in her response to polling questions. However, if her party affiliation is activated at the voting booth, she is likely to vote for the Democratic candidate regardless of the candidate's gender. This divergence could partly explain

dissociations between political attitudes and behavior. Party affiliation and gender are unrelated identities, and one is likely to be deactivated when the other is activated. As another example, shopping for certain products (for example, purchasing a Bose headset) is likely to activate related identities (for example, music identity), resulting in facilitative effects for relevant abilities (for example, music skill) and, at the same time, impairment effects for other abilities (for example, writing skill). Our results suggest that these downstream consequences of identity activation manifest outside of conscious awareness. Future research is needed to design interventions that can make people conscious of these effects so that they can guard against unintended consequences.

As the present work suggests, a potentially important path for future research on the identity-relevancy principle lies in examining the specific identities that can facilitate or inhibit categorization of products relative to the self. For example, are people more likely to mentally represent themselves in terms of objects following the activation of some identities, but less likely to do so following the activation of other identities? Will some identities foster the classification of identity-relevant objects in the self, potentially strengthening the predicted assimilation effects? Will the same identities also inhibit the classification of other, irrelevant objects in the self, potentially accentuating the predicted contrast effects?

Another potential direction for additional research lies in the role of non-ownership-related factors that inspire connections between people and brands or products. For example, recent research has built on ECT principles to demonstrate assimilation and contrast to the self in product judgment and choice based on a brand–self connection (Dagogo-Jack and Forehand 2018). This finding suggests that, while ownership could still be an important marker for the boundary of the self, other dimensions of connectivity between products and people can be useful to predict categorization effects between people and products. In sum, possessions can have profound implications for consumer behavior. Our work opens up exciting avenues for future research on identity principles as well as on the relationships between possessions and the consumer self.

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10. Temporal identity and the pursuit of self-enhancement

Sokiente W. Dagogo-Jack

INTRODUCTION

A long-standing tenet of identity theory is that the self-concept comprises multiple dimensions (Markus and Nurius 1986; Markus and Wurf 1987). Beyond the individual that we are presently (that is, the present self), the self-concept encompasses who we were formerly (that is, the past self), and who we expect to be in the future (that is, the future self). Despite this widely accepted perspective in the psychology literature, consumer researchers have generally been slow to adopt this temporal identity (TI) framework. Accordingly, relative to other identity-relevant topics, there is a dearth of research investigating the manner in which TI influences consumers' judgments, decisions and responses to marketing actions.

That being said, an increasing number of consumer researchers have recently begun to consider the influence of temporal dimensions of the self besides the current self. For example, there is a burgeoning literature on self-continuity and psychological connectedness between the present and future selves (Bartels and Rips 2010; Bartels and Urminsky 2011, 2015; Hershfield et al. 2011; Hershfield et al. 2012; see also Urminsky and Bartels, Chapter 15 in this volume). Likewise, there is growing interest in how temporal comparisons – comparisons of self at different points in time (Albert 1977) – and perceptions of change in the self influence consumers' judgments and decision-making (O'Brien et al. 2012; Dagogo-Jack and Forehand 2018). Altogether, a review of research in consumer behavior and psychology reveals that the diverse TI effects documented in the literature commonly arise in service of self-enhancement: the desire for favorable self-views (Alicke and Sedikides 2009).

According to the identity association principle (Reed et al. 2012), consumers' own feelings and beliefs about themselves can automatically transfer to self-associated stimuli. Thus, people with high (versus low) self-esteem judge self-associated brands more favorably. Although the implicit egotism literature has examined how self-esteem transfers to self-associated brands (Brendl et al. 2005; Gawronski et al. 2007; Perkins and Forehand 2011), researchers have devoted little attention to the role

of TI in such identity association effects. Here, I propose that TI is a critical source of the self-esteem that powers identity association effects. Specifically, consumers can invoke TI to fulfill self-enhancement motives – the general desire to feel good about oneself – in three main ways. Firstly, people make biased temporal comparisons of their past and present (or future and present) selves to preserve perceptions of self-improvement (Wilson and Ross 2001). Secondly, consumers strengthen or weaken their association with past and future selves depending on their implications for current self-regard (Ross and Wilson 2002). Finally, to protect their self-esteem, consumers project their own temporal change onto self-connected brands (Dagogo-Jack and Forehand 2018). Through these various means, consumers maintain positive evaluations of themselves, which then transfer to self-associated stimuli.

SELF-EVALUATION MOTIVES

Identity research has identified four fundamental motives that determine how individuals evaluate themselves: self-assessment motives – the drive for accurate self-knowledge; self-verification motives – the drive to confirm one's self-perceptions; self-improvement motives – the drive to get better; and self-enhancement motives – the drive to view oneself positively (Sedikides and Strube 1995, 1997). Critically, prior research suggests that self-enhancement motives take precedence over all other types of self-evaluative motives (Sedikides 1993; Sedikides and Gregg 2008; Sedikides and Strube 1995, 1997), and the remaining three motives can be characterized as indirectly serving to fulfill the desire for a positive self-concept. Indeed, enhanced perceptions of oneself are integral to psychological well-being (Taylor and Brown 1988). In the sections that follow, I examine TI phenomena through the lens of each of these motives, and discuss how they ultimately are subordinate to the goal of self-enhancement.

SELF-ASSESSMENT MOTIVES AND TI

Self-assessment motives refer to the desire for objective information about oneself, regardless of valence (Sedikides and Strube 1997). By obtaining accurate self-knowledge, people can more successfully navigate the world, as they are better able to set appropriate goals for themselves. Thus, obtaining accurate information about oneself indirectly satisfies self-enhancement needs by increasing the likelihood of successful outcomes in one's life.

Notably, people are primarily concerned with obtaining accurate information about their present self, which is most “me.” By understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the present self, individuals can make decisions that will maximize their chances of success and, consequently, the likelihood of positive current self-regard. TI research suggests that individuals are not equally motivated to enhance all the temporal dimensions of the self (that is, past, present and future selves). Rather, they have a specific drive to enhance the positivity of their present self, as the present self has stronger implications for self-regard than the past and future selves (Wilson and Ross 2001). In fact, in efforts to enhance the present self, people often enlist both past selves (Conway and Ross 1984; Ross and Wilson 2002; Wilson and Ross 2001, 2003) and future selves (Peetz et al. 2009; Wilson et al. 2012).

SELF-VERIFICATION MOTIVES AND TI

Closely related to self-assessment motives are self-verification motives, or the desire to confirm one’s own beliefs about oneself, regardless of valence (Swann 2012; see also Zauberman et al., Chapter 14 in this volume). Whereas self-assessment concerns gaining objective self-knowledge, self-verification concerns subjective self-perceptions. Verifying one’s own self-perceptions bolsters feelings of control in a chaotic world (Swann 2012), which can indirectly make people feel good about themselves (Judge et al. 2002).

By seeking feedback that is consistent with one’s own self-perceptions, individuals can sustain a stable self-concept, which prior TI research has found can increase positive self-regard. For example, in his seminal research on temporal comparisons, Albert (1977) proposed that people have a drive to maintain a sense of stable self-identity over time, and evidence to the contrary is threatening to the self. Illustrating this need to perceive oneself as stable, numerous studies have found that people revise their memory of past attitudes and behaviors so that they are aligned with their current attitudes and behaviors. That is, they recall their past attitudes and behaviors in a manner that enables them to negate evidence of change, and conclude that they have been stable over time (Ross et al. 1981; Ross et al. 1983).

SELF-IMPROVEMENT MOTIVES AND TI

Perhaps even more desirable than stability over time is improvement, and people employ numerous cognitive biases to uphold self-improvement

perceptions (Wilson and Ross 2001; Zell and Alicke 2009). Compared to the other self-evaluation motives, fulfillment of self-improvement motives – the desire to better oneself (Sedikides and Strube 1995, 1997) – is arguably more effective in bolstering self-esteem. Below I review research exploring how the pursuit of self-improvement confers self-esteem.

Self-Improvement and Self-Enhancement

A classic finding in judgment and decision-making is that people have a strong preference for entities that are improving (versus stable or declining). For example, Aronson and Linder (1965) demonstrated a “gain-loss effect” whereby individuals evaluated others more favorably when their relationship improved from negative to positive than when their relationship was always positive. Similarly, Klein and O’Brien (2017) found that people are more inspired by those who improved than those who were consistently good. Admittedly, these effects are more informative of social perception than self-perception, but they nonetheless illustrate the general preference for improvement.

More directly indicating a preference for improvement “in the self,” Hsee and Abelson (1991) found that people prefer hypothetical personal outcomes resulting from improvement to equivalent outcomes resulting from stable or declining trajectories. Specifically, 71 percent of participants preferred grades that improved to grades that were consistently high, and 67 percent of participants preferred salaries that improved to salaries that were consistently high. In fact, at least in terms of income, this preference for improvement is often so strong that people will forgo a higher sum total of money for the sake of maintaining an improving trajectory in income (Hsee et al. 1991).

Although the aforementioned effects were not explicitly explained in terms of self-enhancement, related work speaks to the self-enhancing capacity of this improvement preference. For example, Loewenstein and Sicherman (1991) found that people are more desirous of increasing wages than of increasing rental income. One interpretation of this discrepancy is based on the difference in ego-relevance of wages and rental income. Rental income is less indicative of one’s abilities and traits than wages, and thus changes in rental income should carry weaker implications for self-regard. Thus, insofar as self-improvement satisfies self-enhancement motives, the preference for improvement should be stronger in more ego-relevant domains (for example, wages) than in less ego-relevant domains (for example, rental income).

Furthermore, research examining outcomes of self-improvement reveals its self-enhancing capacity. Illustratively, subjective well-being research

has found that perceived self-improvement in various domains positively correlates with life satisfaction in these same domains (Fox and Kahneman 1992). Indeed, some research even contends that one key function of emotions is to indicate change relative to a reference point, with improvement eliciting positive affect (Carver and Scheier 1990). Thus, personal improvement heightens positive feelings about the self and general positive emotions, both of which are hallmarks of self-enhancement.

Revising the Past in Temporal Comparisons

To satisfy both self-improvement and self-enhancement motives, people often make biased temporal comparisons that allow them to judge themselves as improving. According to temporal self-appraisal theory (Wilson and Ross 2001), individuals maintain positive self-regard by retrospectively derogating their past self to ensure that the current self appears to be better.

In a particularly compelling demonstration of this, Wilson and Ross (2001, Study 3) instructed participants to rate their current selves on ten different dimensions. Two months later, participants rated themselves again on those same ten dimensions and then provided retrospective ratings of themselves two months in the past. Although participants actually declined over the two months, they recalled themselves two months prior as significantly worse than the present (and significantly worse than they actually were two months prior). Thus, participants retrospectively derogated their past selves in order to conclude that they had improved over time, despite evidence to the contrary.

Revealing that this retrospective derogation is self-enhancing, a subsequent experiment manipulated whether participants evaluated themselves or an acquaintance both currently and in the past. Although ratings of one's past self were significantly lower than ratings of one's current self, ratings of an acquaintance's past and current selves were essentially the same. Indicative of self-enhancement, people disparaged their past self to construct evidence that they have improved, but they did not do the same for others.

Selective Attention to Improvement

In addition to fabricating evidence of self-improvement, people self-enhance by selectively attending to feedback indicating personal improvement, and discounting feedback indicating personal decline. For example, Zell and Alicke (2009) gave participants several rounds of a test over ten weeks and then provided temporal and social comparison feedback

to both the test-takers and yoked observers who did not take the test. As the dependent variable, the test-takers and observers evaluated the test-takers' performance. Whereas observers' evaluations only reflected the social comparison feedback, the test-takers' self-evaluations reflected both the temporal and social comparison feedback. However, consistent with self-enhancement, the test-takers' attention to the temporal comparison feedback depended on its valence: when performance improved, test-takers' self-evaluations exceeded observers' evaluations; conversely, when performance declined, test-takers' self-evaluations equaled observers' evaluations. This suggests that test-takers only attended to temporal comparison feedback when it was positive.

PROJECTING PERSONAL CHANGE ONTO BRANDS

The association between consumers and brands has long been of interest to consumer researchers (Belk 1988; Escalas and Bettman 2003; Fournier 1998; Park et al. 2010; see also Escalas et al., Chapter 8 in this volume). Consistent with the identity association principle, which holds that self-evaluations transfer to self-associated brands, prior research has found that consumers' brand evaluations reflect their global attitudes towards themselves (Brendl et al. 2005; Gawronski et al. 2007; Perkins and Forehand 2011), as well as their specific personal traits and attributes (Weiss and Johar 2013; see also Johar et al., Chapter 9 in this volume). Specifically concerning TI, related research has found that self-connected brands can even assume consumers' perceptions of temporal change, which can satisfy self-enhancement motives (Dagogo-Jack and Forehand 2018).

Building on egocentric categorization, the notion that people anchor static brand and product judgments on personal traits (Weiss and Johar 2013, 2016), Dagogo-Jack and Forehand (2018) proposed that people similarly anchor judgments of brand change on their own personal change, a phenomenon referred to as egocentric improvement evaluations. In particular, they found that priming people to focus on ways they have improved versus remained stable over time increased their perceptions of improvement in self-connected brands, but decreased perceptions of improvement in self-disconnected brands. Moreover, these brand change judgments influenced consumers' intentions to upgrade to newer versions of the brand's products (for example, upgrading one's iPhone). Importantly, these effects held when self-focus was high; that is, when people were more likely to use themselves as an anchor for judgments of external entities.

Dagogo-Jack and Forehand (2018) further demonstrate that self-enhancement motives drive the tendency to project personal change

onto self-connected brands. Aligned with research showing that projecting one's traits onto external entities validates the self-concept (Marks and Miller 1987; Ross et al. 1977), factors that influenced self-enhancement motives moderated the effect. In one study, Dagogo-Jack and Forehand (2018) manipulated self-affirmation, which should quell self-enhancement motives. Whereas participants who had no opportunity to self-affirm projected their improvement onto a self-connected brand, those who were allowed to self-affirm did not. In a later study, Dagogo-Jack and Forehand (2018) used false intelligence test feedback to manipulate self-threat. Consistent with the notion that self-threats heighten self-enhancement motives (Brendl et al. 2005; Dommer and Swaminathan 2013), participants in the high self-threat condition projected their self-improvement onto a self-connected brand, whereas those in the low self-threat condition did not. Together, these results demonstrate the underlying role of self-enhancement motives in egocentric improvement evaluations.

SELF-ENHANCING VIA ASSOCIATIONS WITH PAST AND FUTURE SELVES

Beyond using personal change to self-enhance, consumers can self-enhance by strategically strengthening or weakening the association between their current self and past or future selves. Typically, temporally proximal (versus distant) past and future selves feel more connected to the current self and have stronger implications for current self-regard (Ross and Wilson 2003; Wilson and Ross 2001). However, akin to relationships with other people, the extent to which individuals identify with their temporally distant past or future selves can vary both situationally and dispositionally (Pronin and Ross 2006). Ultimately, the level of identification with a past or future self governs the extent to which these temporal dimensions of the self can augment current self-regard (Ross and Wilson 2002, 2003).

Research on temporal self-appraisal theory has found that the favorability of past and future selves determines individuals' subjective distance from those selves. To protect current self-views, people distance themselves from unsuccessful past selves but approach successful past selves. Providing evidence of this, Ross and Wilson (2002) found that undergraduates felt subjectively closer to past courses in which they received their best grade than courses in which they received their worse grade, controlling for actual elapsed time. Furthermore, this was more pronounced for individuals with high trait self-esteem – those who are more adept at self-enhancing – than those with low trait self-esteem. More directly demonstrating that this distancing is a manifestation of self-enhancement motives, Ross and

Wilson found that people felt farther from embarrassing (versus proud) moments from their own past, but felt equidistant from embarrassing and moments from an acquaintance's past. As other people's past experiences have less bearing on one's self-regard, people should be less motivated to avoid or approach others' embarrassing or proud past experiences.

Relatedly, prior research has demonstrated the effects of the temporal distance of a past or future self on evaluations of the current self. Generally, the closer the objective or subjective distance to a past or future self, the stronger its implications for current self-regard (Ross and Wilson 2003; Wilson and Ross 2003). Wilson and Ross randomly assigned undergraduate students to recall a past success or failure from high school and also manipulated the subjective temporal distance of this past event. Revealing the self-enhancing and self-threatening capacity of past selves, they found that participants who felt closer to a past success rated their current self more positively than those who felt farther from a past success. Likewise, participants who felt closer to a past failure rated their current self more negatively than those who felt farther from a past failure.

Although the previous examples focused exclusively on past selves, similar effects of subjective temporal distance have more recently been obtained for future selves. Specifically, Wilson et al. (2012, Study 1) manipulated subjective distance to a future self and found that participants evaluated temporally close future selves more favorably than temporally distant future selves. In a subsequent study, they followed the same basic procedures but manipulated whether participants evaluated themselves or an acquaintance. Consistent with the notion that the current self benefits from elevating close (versus distant) future selves, but not from elevating close (versus distant) future others, the original effect replicated for the self but not for acquaintances. Providing more conclusive evidence of the underlying self-enhancement motive, the effect of temporal distance on future self-evaluations was mitigated when people were given the opportunity to self-affirm. Finally, Wilson and colleagues manipulated the subjective distance of a successful future self and found that subjectively close (versus distant) future success increased the positivity of current self-evaluations. Thus, the success or failure of close future selves, much like close past selves, directly affects current self-evaluations.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A review of TI effects in consumer behavior and psychology suggest that a key function of TI is to facilitate the satisfaction of self-enhancement

motives. According to the identity association principle, stimuli that are associated with favorable identities can automatically obtain general positive evaluations as well as other identity-relevant attributes (Reed et al. 2012). As a corollary, people can maintain self-esteem by perceiving themselves as improving or associating their current self with successful past or future selves. Ultimately, considering the role of TI in pursuit of self-enhancement opens up several avenues for future research.

Future Research: Preference for Self-Improvement

Regarding the preference for self-improvement, many additional questions arise. First, temporal self-appraisal research has found that people denigrate past selves to self-enhance by concluding that they have improved over time (Wilson and Ross 2001; McFarland and Alvaro 2000). Another potential route to self-enhancement is basking in past glory; that is, elevating rather than denigrating past selves. For example, we have all encountered the former athlete who desperately hangs on to his glory days. Although his fitness has declined over time and the comparison standard (his younger, fitter self) is far superior to his current self, he can still self-enhance by focusing on how good he once was. Interestingly, whereas consumers typically avoid products associated with threatened identities (White and Argo 2009; White et al. 2012), the self-enhancement afforded by basking in past glory might insulate consumers against salient threats and encourage the approach of products associated with the threatened identity. Future research should explore this possibility. Future research is needed to understand when this is most likely to occur and how it might influence

Another promising direction for future research is examining the effects of simultaneous social and temporal comparison feedback. In addition to temporal comparisons, people turn to social comparisons to self-evaluate (Festinger 1954), and social comparisons similarly provide a route to self-enhancement (Brown 2012; Lin et al. 2003; Tesser 1988). Given that individuals often have both temporal and social comparison information at their disposal, how will conflicting information influence self-improvement preferences? Will people still prefer improvement (versus decline) when improvement is accompanied by low social standing but decline is accompanied by high social standing? Pitting these two against one another will shed light on what type of self-comparison – social or temporal – is most effective for self-enhancement.

A third direction for future research is to test whether consumers construct temporal comparisons for brands in the same manner that they construct temporal comparisons for the self. Although people revise their past selves when engaging in temporal comparisons (Wilson and Ross

2001; McFarland and Alvaro 2000), it is unclear whether they do the same for brands. This may ultimately depend on the level of self-brand connection, with consumers being motivated to perceive improvement in self-connected brands and thus denigrating the brand's past to satisfy this.

Future Research: Associations Between the Current Self and Past/Future Selves

Although individuals typically feel closer to successful past selves (or future) selves and temporally proximal selves have stronger implications for current self-regard (Ross and Wilson 2002; Wilson et al. 2012), little is known about how this affects consumption. For example, will consumers devalue brands associated with unsuccessful past selves? Conversely, will they place higher value on brands associated with successful past selves? Admittedly, there is considerable research on nostalgic consumption (Loveland et al. 2010; Wildschut et al. 2006; Zhou et al. 2012), but this literature does not examine nostalgic preferences through the lens of temporal distancing for self-enhancement purposes.

Relatedly, how does self-brand connection influence the subjective temporal distance of past positive and negative events in a brand's history? For example, Volkswagen enthusiasts might perceive the emissions scandal of 2015 as subjectively farther in the past than those who are not connected to Volkswagen. Conversely, Volkswagen enthusiasts might perceive Volkswagen's positive actions (for example, corporate social responsibility efforts) as subjectively closer to the present than consumers who are not connected to Volkswagen. Conceivably, the subjective temporal distance of different events could subsequently influence purchase intentions and willingness-to-pay for the brand's products. Future research should explore whether consumers distance self-threatening brand incidents in the same way that they distance self-threatening personal experiences.

Future Research: Personal Change and Brand Change

Finally, the association between one's own perceived change and brands generates numerous future research questions. Prior research in this area has shown that people project their own change onto self-connected brands. One question that naturally arises is whether the effect operates in the reverse direction: that is, can change in a self-connected brand transfer to the self? Encouragingly, in recent egocentric categorization research, Weiss and Johar (2016) found that consumers perceive attributes of owned products in themselves. Future research should explore whether similar effects occur for judgments of change over time.

A second question that warrants additional research is: what happens when people perceive themselves as declining? On one hand, consumers might simply project their negative change onto self-connected brands, which could ultimately discourage product upgrades. On the other hand, consumers might compensate for their negative change by exaggerating the improvement in self-connected brands, which could encourage product upgrades. Insofar as brands can be extensions of the self (Belk 1988), consumers may rely on the attributes of brands – here, a brand's improvement – to make up for their own deficiency on the same attribute.

Lastly, future research should examine how improvement in a brand affects self-brand connection. Given the general preference for improvement (Aronson and Linder 1965; Klein and O'Brien 2017) and the strong desire to associate the self with improvement (Hsee and Abelson 1991; Hsee et al. 1991), it is possible that consumers will approach brands that they see as improving and form self-associations with these brands. In turn, as proposed earlier, these self-associations with improving brands might increase perceptions of self-improvement. Investigating the possibility of this phenomenon, along with the numerous others proposed, would advance the understanding of how temporal identity, brand relationships and self-enhancement motives jointly shape consumer behavior.

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11. A framework for considering dissociative identity effects in consumption

Bonnie Simpson, Lea Dunn and Katherine White

One way in which individuals form, contextualize and maintain a sense of their own identity is by associating the self with a given category label (for example, familial roles, gender, nationality, and so on) (Reed et al. 2012). Such category-based identity formation is often driven by associations with relevant social group memberships (or reference groups) (White and Dahl 2006; Tajfel and Turner 1979). Much of the extant research on social group influence centers on positive reference groups: groups that individuals associate with in some way, such as membership groups (that is, groups that an individual belongs to and feels a part of) and aspirational groups (that is, groups to which an individual aspires to be a part of) (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005). A large body of literature has demonstrated that individuals prefer to act in ways that allow them to reinforce their connections with positive social groups (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Childers and Rao 1992; Cialdini and Goldstein 2003). Indeed, the identity association principle proposed by Reed et al. (2012) proposes that when stimuli become associated with a positively regarded identity (for example, a positive reference group), those stimuli will themselves garner more positive evaluations. We focus on the influence of the mirror of this associative principle: dissociation, or the notion that individuals are often motivated to avoid undesired identities (White and Dahl 2006, 2007). In this chapter, we review the research demonstrating that people often are driven by the desire to avoid associating with undesired identities. Moreover, we introduce a conceptual framework of dissociative influence that examines the distinct processes by which dissociative effects can occur, and use this to propose novel directions for future research.

THE NATURE OF REFERENCE GROUPS AND HOW THEY SHAPE IDENTITY

One view of consumption is that people choose products, brands and behaviors that allow them to construct and maintain their identities, as well as to communicate their identities to others (Belk 1988; Kleine et al. 1993).

In addition to a sense of personal identity (that is, related to one's individual sense of self), people hold social identities (that is, related to the groups to which they belong or are affiliated) (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Thus, people are likely to consume products and brands that represent, reinforce and maintain positive aspects of either their own personal identity or an identity linked to a social group membership (Escalas and Bettman 2003). The majority of work examining the influence of social group memberships on consumption finds that consumers are motivated to be seen in a positive light and, thus, are more likely to prefer and purchase products or brands used by in-group and/or aspirational group members (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Childers and Rao 1992; Escalas and Bettman 2003).

By consuming in ways that are congruent with positively viewed social groups, individuals are able to positively construct, maintain and communicate identities (Belk 1988; Richins 1994). We might, for instance, purchase a certain type of product (for example, a pair of Nike running shoes) because it is associated with a group we aspire to (for example, successful athletes), and through doing so we can signal to ourselves and others with whom and what we identify. According to McCracken (1989), products hold meaning as a function of the characteristics of who uses them. When social group members use and display products, associations related to group characteristics can be transferred to the product or brand. Indeed, work suggests that brands linked to positively viewed social identities become connected to consumers' mental representations of the self in ways that allow the consumer to create, cultivate and define their self-concepts (Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005; Escalas et al., Chapter 8 in this volume).

The fact that the majority of the relevant literature demonstrates that positively viewed social identities (for example, membership and aspirational groups) are most likely to be utilized in the creation, definition and communication of identity highlights the primacy of what researchers have called the "identity association principle": people will respond more positively to stimuli that have somehow become associated with a positively regarded identity (Reed et al. 2012). Importantly, however, the literature has begun to take an interest in social groups that represent identities or groups with which one does not wish to associate. While "out-groups" refer to reference groups to which an individual does not belong, "dissociative groups" are those that an individual wants to actively avoid being associated with (Englis and Solomon 1995; White and Dahl 2006, 2007). We propose that, akin to the identity association principle, a dissociation principle also exists wherein consumers are motivated to avoid association with stimuli that have become linked to a negatively viewed dissociative group (White and Dahl 2006, 2007).

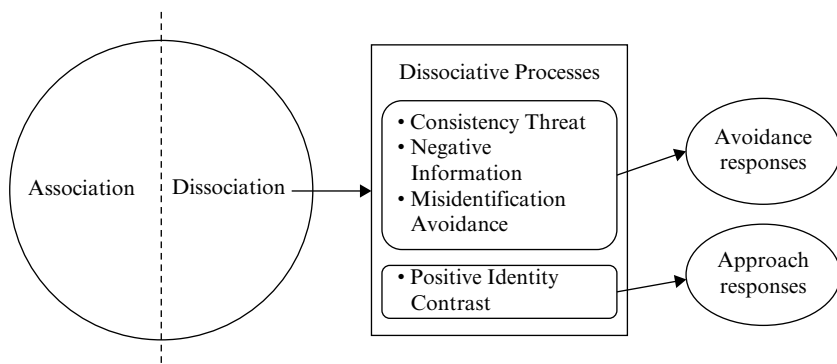


Figure 11.1 A framework for dissociative reference group effects

A FRAMEWORK FOR DISSOCIATIVE REFERENCE GROUP EFFECTS

Consistent with how they respond to positive reference groups, consumers similarly rely on dissociative groups as a social category to form, contextualize and maintain their sense of self-identity. For instance, when a product or action becomes associated with a negatively regarded identity (dissociative group), it will often receive negative evaluations and be avoided by the consumer (White and Dahl 2006, 2007). We put forth a conceptualization recognizing that dissociation is a mirror image of the identity association principle (Reed et al. 2012), whereby stimuli that become associated with a negatively regarded dissociative group will receive negative evaluations (Dunn et al. 2013). We then posit that dissociative avoidance effects can emerge as a function of one of three processes: consistency threat, negative information avoidance and misidentification avoidance. Finally, while dissociative effects most often result in avoidance responses, emerging literature suggests that this may not always be the case. As such, the potential for approach effects is discussed via the fourth dissociative process in the framework, positive identity contrast, by which consumers can become inclined to engage in consumption behaviors consistent with those of a dissociative reference group (see Figure 11.1).

Consistency Threat

The first process by which dissociative influence operates is one wherein dissociative association is perceived as a threat to the consistency of the individual's private self-concept. If the consumer uses a product or engages

in a behavior that is strongly linked to a dissociative social group, this can be an inconsistency threat to how the consumer views the self. Thus, to protect one's self-identity, consumers may avoid behaviors, products or brands that are somehow linked to dissociative groups. In one example, White and Dahl (2007) demonstrated that consumers will avoid associating with dissociative groups, but not out-groups more generally. For instance, Canadians avoided choosing a pen that was associated with American identity, an out-group that they are motivated to establish their distinctiveness from. However, Canadians did not display avoidance of a neutral out-group, such as being Belgian. Consistent with the notion that these effects are driven by threats to the individual self-consistency, the effects were heightened under conditions where the individual self-concept was primed in some way, or when the in-group identity (that is, being Canadian) was particularly important to participants.

In other work, males have been shown to avoid options that are linked to being female. While males do not necessarily think negatively of females, they are motivated to maintain a sense of identity that is not associated with being "feminine." For example, males will avoid a steak when it is called the "ladies' cut" versus when it is simply called the "chef's cut" (White and Dahl 2006). Other work shows that males will avoid engaging in "green" behaviors such as recycling or using reusable bags because being eco-friendly is associated with "femininity," representing a dissociative social category of female that is inconsistent with their masculine identity (Brough et al. 2016). Supporting the notion that this is driven by a consistency threat, the effects were enhanced when masculinity was threatened in some way, and mitigated when masculinity was affirmed. Similarly, males may avoid ethically responsible brands because such brands are associated with being "warm," which is viewed as an inherently feminine trait (Antonetti and Maklan 2016; see also Shang and Peloza 2016).

In another line of inquiry, Naylor et al. (2012) found that simply having information about the dissimilarity of a group's composition on a brand's social media page is enough to lower evaluations of the brand. Specifically, when the brand's fans were made up of homogeneously dissimilar individuals, consumers had less positive attitudes toward the brand than when the composition represented an in-group of similar others or even a balance of similar and dissimilar others. The research found that this effect occurred because the consumer inferred that they had less in common with the "typical shopper" when dissimilar others were represented in the social media feed. Taken together, the literature demonstrates that dissociative groups often lead to avoidance effects because they represent a choice that is incongruent with how the consumer privately views their own self-concept.

Avoidance of Negative Identity Information

In addition to dissociative responses that occur as a result of self-consistency threats, research has also considered how individuals avoid linking negative associations with their own self-concept. For instance, in order to maintain an overall positive self-perception, consumers may distance themselves from integral identities when these identities become negatively imbued in some way (that is, threatened; Spangenberg and Angle, Chapter 13 in this volume) and engage in compensatory consumption (Rucker and Cannon, Chapter 12 in this volume). Thus, when consumers receive information that casts social categories they belong to in a negative light, they will often avoid those negative elements of their identity via avoidance of associated products (White and Argo 2009; White et al. 2018). For example, White and Argo (2009) examined how social identity threat influences consumer preferences for identity-relevant versus irrelevant products. They found that when a consumer's own gender identity was threatened, participants low in collective self-esteem (Luhtanen and Crocker 1992) were subsequently more likely to avoid products associated with their own gender. By avoiding these products, one is able to reaffirm a sense of positive self-worth.

Building on this work, White et al. (2012) found that self-construal relates to how consumers respond to social identity threat. Specifically, consumers with a more independent self-construal were more likely to avoid products associated with the threatened identity. This occurs because those with an independent self-construal are more likely to see the social identity threat as a threat to their self-worth, and thus avoid products in an effort to reaffirm their self-worth. On the other hand, those with a more interdependent self-construal are more likely to see the social identity threat as a threat to their sense of belonging, and cope with the threat by associating with their in-group identity, even when it is threatened. Finally, White et al. (2018) found that, in private, when consumers are likely considering the private self-concept, they avoided products associated with their own in-group (for example, university, city or occupation) when it was cast in a negative light. Thus, one key process that leads to dissociative responses is one wherein the consumer protects the individual self from negative identity associations.

Avoiding Misidentification

The third dissociative process is grounded in a desire to avoid misidentification. This desire arises when there is a concern that others might miscategorize the individual as belonging to a dissociative out-group. An

important distinction from consistency threat, then, is that rather than a private threat to the self, a public or identity-signaling element must be present for the misidentification process to be activated. For example, White and Dahl (2006) found that men were more likely to avoid and negatively evaluate a steak selection when it was described in terms of a dissociative out-group (for example, “ladies’ cut” steak) than when associated with a neutral group (for example, “chef’s cut” steak). While this occurred in private (due to consistency threat), the effects were amplified when the behavior was to be public, and it was heightened for those who were particularly concerned with the image of the self they convey to others. Thus, the observed effects were due at least in part to a desire to avoid other people misidentifying the consumer as displaying behaviors linked to a dissociative group.

Importantly, unlike the consistency threat mechanism, this process is related to the verification principle (that is, how consumers use external and social information to determine their progress toward their ideal representation of an identity; Reed et al. 2012), as consumers will abandon previously held tastes when these choices become threatened by dissociative group use (Spangenberg and Angle, Chapter 13 in this volume). Berger and Heath (2007, 2008) examined when people might be more or less likely to diverge from the preferences of others, finding that when a dissociative group adopts the use of a preferred product category that clearly signals identity (for example, music, but not dish soap), consumers are likely to abandon (or perhaps hide; Thomas et al. 2015) their preferences to avoid being misidentified as a group member. Interestingly, work by Bellezza and Keinan (2014) found a way to avoid abandonment when a brand becomes adopted by a dissociative group. Specifically, they found that when the dissociative group did not claim a brand as its own but instead discussed its use as a “brand tourist,” individuals were less likely to abandon the brand.

In addition, other work has found explicit ways to use dissociative groups to positively change an individual’s behavior. For example, Berger and Rand (2008) found that an effective way to get consumers (that is, undergraduates) to avoid engaging in negative behaviors such as eating junk food and underage drinking is to communicate that the behavior is primarily conducted by a dissociative group (that is, graduate students). They found that the primary reason for avoiding the behaviour was to avoid being treated as a member of the dissociative group, and thus those who were high in self-monitoring (who control their actions to achieve a desired public image) were more likely to avoid dissociative behaviours. Though while some past work suggests that exposure to stereotyped dissociative consumers (such as obese individuals) might activate stereotype-consistent goal commitment (for example, low commitment to health),

and thus result in stereotype-consistent behavior (for example, indulgent consumption) (Campbell and Mohr 2011), McFerran et al. (2010) found that when other individuals were present (that is, the behavior was public) consumers anchored their food consumption quantity on the choices of a dissociative other. For example, when an obese consumer chose a large amount of unhealthy or healthy food, the participants were more likely to choose a small amount of unhealthy or healthy food. Similarly, if the obese consumer chose a small amount of unhealthy or healthy food, participants were more likely to take a large amount. In this case, the motivation to avoid a behavior similar to that of the dissociative group resulted in an adjusted food quantity, regardless of whether or not this was goal-consistent (for example, health-consistent).

Positive Identity Contrast

The first three processes outlined in the framework share a commonality in that they focus on ways in which dissociative social categories lead consumers to diverge from or avoid certain products, brands or behaviors. The fourth process we highlight, positive identity contrast, thus raises a critical distinction in the literature: dissociative groups may not always lead to avoidance responses. Some research shows, for example, that one might actually exhibit an approach response to products or behaviors associated with a dissociative group. Counterintuitively, we note that such results could be viewed as being a form of identity contrast, wherein individuals engage in the focal behavior displayed by the dissociative group to create a comparative affirmation that they are positively distinct from the dissociative group.

For instance, work on ironic consumption has found that consumers may actively approach a dissociative-group product or brand if they are doing so in an ironic fashion (Warren and Mohr 2018). By engaging in a behavior that is congruent with a dissociative identity in an ironic fashion, the consumer is showing how their own identity positively (in their own view) contrasts with the identity of the core users. In another example, Shalev and Morwitz (2012) found that when a counter-stereotypical product user (for example, someone who is viewed as low status) positively evaluates a product, this can lead to more positive product evaluations on the part of an observer. On the face of it, one might expect that the low-status user would be viewed as dissociative and that a negative evaluation might emerge. However, the authors propose that this effect occurs because comparing oneself to a low-status (that is, dissociative) user (who is typically not expected to use the product) can lead to a decreased evaluation of the self (for example, “Wow, even this dissociative individual has access

to this product that I don't"). As a result, the individual may purchase the same product in an attempt to positively contrast the self relative to the counter-stereotypical user, and thus restore positive distinctive feelings about the self.

Research also indicates that when a dissociative group publicly performs well on a positively viewed action (for example, environmental conservation activities), this acts as a threat to consumers' group identity and motivates them to perform well to affirm the positivity of the in-group (White et al. 2014). In other words, individuals make a comparison (that is, contrast) between their own group and the dissociative group and, as a result, seek to perform even better in terms of the positively viewed behavior. Finally, Dommer et al. (2013) found that when low-self-esteem individuals feel socially excluded (that is, feel different from, contrasted against the in-group others), they are more likely to horizontally differentiate themselves by seeking affiliation with another group through consumption of out-group products as a means of reaffirming self-esteem. Thus, rather than always avoiding the behaviors of a dissociative group (Berger and Rand 2008; White and Dahl 2006, 2007), our framework illustrates that through the positive identity contrast process consumers can be motivated to emulate behavior engaged in by a dissociative group.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Our theoretical framework suggests that consumers not only form, cultivate and communicate their self-concepts by associating with positively viewed identities (Reed et al. 2012; Tajfel and Turner 1979), but they also do so by avoiding identities that they wish to differentiate the self from (Markus and Nurius 1986; White and Dahl 2006). We highlight the key processes underlying dissociative identity effects and how they can be used to organize the existing literature; and we next suggest that they point to promising directions for future research.

First, while past research demonstrates that consumers are motivated to avoid dissociative options due to a desire to avoid identity inconsistency, future research could examine how to mitigate such negative reactions. One interesting and important practical context where avoiding identity inconsistency plays out is the emerging polarized political landscape, where individuals are indiscriminately clinging to partisan memberships not because of beliefs about the issues but because of a desire to avoid association with the other political party (Cohn 2014). Such divisiveness is on the rise and can lead to disparagement or negative stereotyping of out-groups (Theodoridis 2016). For example, in the United States there

has been a substantial shift toward negative partisanship or negative affect toward the opposing political party (Abramowitz and Webster 2016).

One question for future research, then, is: how might we overcome such dissociative divides? One possible solution may lie in the fluidity and flexibility of the self-concept, which is composed of numerous and varied identities (Markus and Kunda 1986). Different identities can become relatively more activated and influence our cognitions and behaviors, depending on the situation (Tajfel and Turner 1979), and situational cues can make certain identities more salient than others (Forehand et al. 2002; Reed 2004; Reed and Forehand 2016). Thus, one solution to overcoming dissociation could be to activate a superordinate identity that subsumes the identity which the consumer is motivated to dissociate from. For example, could activating a superordinate identity (for example, American) assuage the dissociative effects of a political identity (for example, Democrat) when faced with the actions of a dissociative group (for example, Republican)? Past work has found promising effects of identity recategorization in overcoming dissociative reactions to out-groups (Gaertner et al. 1993; Levine et al. 2005). We proposed that such an approach might similarly reduce negative reactions to dissociative groups based on political affiliations.

Preliminary work in our lab explored whether activating an “American” identity versus a “Republican” identity on a volunteer’s T-shirt could impact the extent to which Democrats were willing to give money to a fictional employment training charity associated with the Republican Party. In addition, we examined whether differences would be more pronounced for those who felt highest in affective polarization (that is, the degree to which a person feels emotional extremes when thinking about the dissociative party; Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015). American participants ($n = 200$) who self-identified as Democrats were asked to read some information about an organization that was described as having an affiliation with Republicans. Participants were then asked to imagine encountering a volunteer for this organization outside the grocery store. We manipulated the wording on the volunteer’s T-shirt such that it highlighted a Republican group membership or a superordinate (American) identity membership. We also had participants complete a measure of affective polarization (Garrett et al. 2014). While making a particular identity salient via the volunteer’s T-shirt had no impact on those low in affective polarization (they were equally willing to give to the charity, regardless), those highest in affective polarization exhibited greater intentions to give when the volunteer signaled an American identity versus a Republican identity. These data provide initial evidence that when affective polarization is high, communicating a superordinate identity (that is, American) might decrease polarized reactions to a dissociative group (that is, Republican).

While recategorization is one potential idea for how to decrease negative outcomes of dissociation due to self-consistency threat, there are likely to be other possible solutions. As suggested by Choi and Winterich (2013), individual differences such as moral identity may decrease perceived social distance, and increase willingness to try a dissociative brand. One potential direction for research to examine the mitigation of dissociative influence, then, is to enhance a sense of moral identity and expand the circle of moral regard to include dissociative group members (Reed and Aquino 2003). Moreover, activities and communications that enhance perspective-taking, which can increase empathy, may similarly help to decrease this perceived social distance (Batson et al. 1997; Dovidio et al. 1990). In sum, we propose that future research might profitably resolve consistency threats by examining moderators of dissociative avoidance effects in ways that cultivate greater inclusion of, or understanding of, the dissociative group.

Second, work could examine ways to resolve dissociative influence stemming from wanting to avoid negative information that is associated with the consumer's own self-concept. While White and Argo (2009) discuss how consumers may distance themselves from identity-related products when the focal social identity is threatened, it could be interesting to see whether the same effect would occur when the identity itself is not threatened, but one's place as a representative of that identity is threatened (for example, you are not a good representative of that category). For example, working mothers might be called out for not being a good enough mother because they need to devote time to work as well as family. Conversely, stay-at-home mothers may also be berated for not being a progressive enough woman. How does communication like this change how consumers hold or express their held identity? Would consumers be likely to avoid in-group products (e.g., Dommer et al. 2013; White and Argo 2009)? Or might they reaffirm their commitment to the group and "double down" on the identity, choosing more identity-related products, or even more conspicuous identity-related products (e.g., White et al. 2018)?

Third, research could further explore when consumers dissociate from products to avoid being misidentified by other consumers. For example, future research could examine the intricacies of the conditions under which dissociative group adoption would lead to abandonment. The work of Bellezza and Keinan (2014) suggests that adoption by a dissociative other will not lead to abandonment of a brand if the dissociative user does not claim to be part of the core brand group. Similarly, work by Han et al. (2010) finds that elite users of the brand may be less likely to abandon the brand when "poseurs" begin using it, but instead buy less conspicuous versions that are less likely to be recognized except by other elites. Could it be, then, that abandonment of a taste or product might depend on how

conspicuous the consumption of the product is by the dissociative group? For example, would it be more of a threat if the dissociative group were to adopt a product that was more conspicuous (high brand prominence, “louder”) or if members of the group were more vocal about their use of the product, compared to if the product was inconspicuous or the dissociative group less vocal about product use?

Fourth, in regard to the identity contrast process, future research could explore whether there are elements of the product, brand or cause that the dissociative group is advocating that may lead to acceptance by the consumer. In the realm of prosocial behavior, would it be possible to obtain increased donations for a cause advocated for by the dissociative group if the charity highlighted a universal need? Or, could social clout play into the adoption of products used by the dissociative group? For example, if the product or brand boasted extreme acceptance, luxury, status, or an element that was being elevated by society at large, would this lead to greater adoption by the consumer?

CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have presented a theoretical framework that highlights the processes by which dissociative identity effects can operate. We reviewed the research literature on dissociative identity effects via this lens and then we turned to highlighting potential directions for future research. We hope that our conceptualization will help to spur further theoretical advances, as well as additional research in the domain of dissociative influence.

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PART III

THE IDENTITY VERIFICATION PRINCIPLE

12. Identity and compensatory consumption

Derek D. Rucker and Christopher Cannon

INTRODUCTION

Consumers have the desire for self-verification: people seek out information that validates and affirms their desired identity or view of themselves (Swann 1983). Examples of self-verification include a runner who wants to know that she is fast, a father who desires to view himself as a selfless caregiver, and a professor who seeks to verify she is a successful scholar. However, people's desire for self-verification can be threatened by information or circumstances that challenge their desired identity. The athlete may lose a race, the father may fail to calm his crying baby, and the professor may have her manuscript rejected.

In this chapter, we discuss one means by which consumers respond to such threats: compensatory consumption. To do so, the chapter is organized as follows. First, we discuss self-discrepancy theory and its relation to self-verification. Second, we explain the notion of "compensatory consumption," and we delineate five distinct means by which consumption can help protect and/or repair one's desired identity in the face of an inconsistency. Finally, we discuss future directions for the study of identity and compensatory consumption in consumer research.

SELF-DISCREPANCY THEORY

As reviewed elsewhere in this *Handbook* (see Urminsky and Bartels, Chapter 15 in this volume; Wheeler and DeMarree, Chapter 23 in this volume; Simpson, Dunn and White, Chapter 11 in this volume), the self-concept – an individual's mental representation of their identity – plays an important role in human behavior. One role of the self-concept is to guide behavior. And one critical means by which a person's self-concept guides behavior is through the comparison of one's current self-concept to a standard; a reference point to assess how one is doing (see Dagogo-Jack, Chapter 10 in this volume, for a discussion of temporal discrepancies).

Higgins introduced self-discrepancy theory to understand how people respond to comparisons of their current self against different standards or self-guides (Higgins 1987, 1989a, 1989b). Higgins suggested that people

understand their current identity – the actual self – by comparing it to two distinct self-standards: the ought self and the ideal self. The ought self is a standard that consists of individuals' obligations and responsibilities; the ought self reflects what a person feels they should be doing. The ideal self is a standard comprised of one's hopes and wishes; the ideal self reflects what a person aspires to be.

Where self-verification theory suggests that people seek to validate their identity (Swann 1983), self-discrepancy theory recognizes that people's identities are not always validated. Moreover, self-discrepancy theory articulates that affective consequences arise when individuals receive feedback that either validates or challenges their identity. When little or no discrepancy exists between the actual self and a standard, individuals experience positive affective consequences. However, when a sufficient discrepancy exists between the actual self and either the ought or ideal self, individuals experience negative affective consequences; this is also what Spangenberg and Angle (Chapter 13 in this volume) refer to as a “strength” threat, or a challenge to the association between the self and the identity. Of note, Higgins (1987) suggested that individuals who meet “ought standards” tend to experience relief, whereas individuals that meet “ideal standards” experience joy. In contrast, individuals who have discrepancies with “ought standards” tend to experience agitation, whereas individuals that have discrepancies with “ideal standards” tend to experience dejection.

Self-discrepancies often arise from, or are triggered by, psychological threats in one's environment. We use the term “psychological threat” to denote a stimulus in the environment or in a task that has the potential to evoke a self-discrepancy. For example, in the opening examples, psychological threats can arise in the form of one's performance against peers (for example, other MBA students), feedback from others (for example, other Facebook users), or even one's own self-assessment (for example, satisfaction with one's work). Because of the negative affective consequences of self-discrepancies, once present, individuals are motivated to reduce the discrepancy. Although multiple means exist to resolve self-discrepancies (see Tesser 2000), in this chapter we explore compensatory consumption.

COMPENSATORY CONSUMPTION

We use the term “compensatory consumption” to describe any consumption-related action or behavior that arises as a means to respond to, and potentially assuage, a self-discrepancy (Mandel et al. 2017; Rucker and Galinsky 2008, 2013). Consistent with prior treatments, we note that the term “consumption” is broadly used to capture the emphasis on consumer

behavior and thus reflects behavior in the form of actual consumption as well as the acquisition of, or desire for, consumer products and services.¹

Mandel et al. (2017) suggested that self-discrepancies can lead consumers to engage in at least five distinct and separable forms of compensatory consumption: direct resolution, symbolic self-completion, fluid compensation, dissociation and escapism. In this section, we define each of these forms of compensatory consumption, provide an example of academic work in support of the form, and discuss how each form can help consumers to respond to a self-discrepancy. Finally, we discuss the potential prevalence of compensatory consumption in the real world as opposed to a mere lab phenomenon.

To illustrate the distinct nature of each compensatory strategy, we focus on how an individual that has the same discrepancy – a discrepancy between their actual and ideal intelligence – might respond. Specifically, consider a situation where Sam, who desires to be a successful MBA, has received a poor score on a practice version of the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT), one potential indicator of Sam's MBA potential. As a consequence of this performance, a discrepancy may occur between Sam's actual and desired identity as a business leader.

Direct Resolution

Direct resolution involves the use of consumption to improve one's abilities on the dimension of the self-discrepancy. An individual who engages in direct resolution shifts their consumption preferences and behavior in a manner that will allow them to resolve the discrepancy by actually changing their standing on the dimension of interest. For example, in response to the poor performance on the practice GMAT, Sam might purchase study guides and enroll in preparatory courses before retaking the test. This is a direct resolution strategy because Sam purchases and consumes items in an effort to improve following the poor performance – and thus reduce the self-discrepancy with regard to being a successful business leader – when it comes time to take the actual GMAT.

As an example of direct resolution, consider work by Kim and Gal (2014). The authors exposed participants to a psychological threat through negative feedback about their intelligence. Specifically, in one experiment, participants completed a measure represented as a cognitive intelligence test. Participants were either told they performed poorly on the test or

¹ Mandel et al. (2017) also use the term “compensatory consumer behavior.” We view compensatory consumer behavior and compensatory consumption as synonymous terms and do not distinguish between them.

were given no indication of their performance. Participants told they had performed poorly – and thus had a self-discrepancy on the domain of their intelligence – expressed greater interest in a subscription to a program that would help to train their brain. In another experiment, Kim and Gal demonstrated that direct resolution was not limited to the domain of intelligence. Specifically, individuals placed in a position of low power – via the completion of an episodic recall task (see Galinsky et al. 2003; Rucker and Galinsky 2008, 2009) – indicated a greater interest in a book that would educate them on how to become powerful and influential.

Consumers might utilize direct resolution because they have the expectation that consumption in the form of direct resolution may address the self-discrepancy by closing or eliminating the deficit. Of course, the fact that individuals acquire or purchase products that offer direct resolution does not guarantee resolution of the self-discrepancy. An individual could acquire books to make them smarter, but ultimately not succeed in mastering the materials.

Symbolic Self-Completion

Compensatory consumption in the form of symbolic self-completion involves the use or acquisition of markers that signal a desired identity, even though they do not resolve the root of the problem (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1981, 1982). In the case of Sam, Sam might respond to the poor performance by purchasing a sweatshirt of his top business school preference, the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. This sweatshirt serves as a signal of Sam's commitment to being a thought leader in business. However, notice that, unlike direct resolution, Sam's choice to wear the sweater does nothing to solve the poor performance on the practice GMAT.

Research by Gao et al. (2009) provides a clear example of symbolic self-completion. In this work, the authors created a discrepancy with respect to how intelligent individuals saw themselves. To create this discrepancy, participants wrote about their intelligence with either their dominant or non-dominant hand. Gao and colleagues predicted that the use of one's non-dominant hand would lead to a "shaky" view of one's self on the dimension of intelligence. Subsequently, participants were given an opportunity to affirm their intelligence or not. Finally, participants were asked to choose between a product that was symbolically associated with intelligence (a fountain pen) versus one that was not (a pack of M&Ms). When participants were not given an option to affirm their intelligence, those with a "shaken sense" of their own intelligence were more likely to choose the object associated with intelligence.

Why do people engage in symbolic self-completion if it fails to address the cause of the self-discrepancy? The idea behind symbolic self-completion is that self-discrepancies are problematic not because of a single outcome, but because they lead people to question their general standing on an important dimension of self-worth. Symbolic self-completion is useful because it serves to increase confidence, despite a particular setback, that they have general worth on the dimension of importance (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1981, 1982).

Fluid Compensation

Fluid compensation is a term given to describe the use of consumption to activate or validate an important aspect of one's identity that is not central to the self-discrepancy (see Heine et al. 2006). In essence, a person validates the self on a dimension where the self already meets their standards. In the case of Sam and the GMAT, Sam might engage in consumption that validates another important part of Sam's identity. For example, if Sam is very athletic, Sam might purchase a new pair of running shoes or purchase a new frame for the medal Sam won in a triathlon. Unlike direct resolution and symbolic self-completion, fluid compensation does not emphasize the dimension of the self-discrepancy. Instead, an individual engages in consumption behaviors that affirm a completely different part of their self-concept.

As an example of fluid compensation, consider work by Sobol and Darke (2014). In this research, participants were exposed to idealized advertising models, which lowered participants' perceptions of their own attractiveness (that is, created as self-discrepancy). Although the self-discrepancy emerged on the dimension of attractiveness, Sobol and Darke found that participants were more likely to compensate by making more economically sound consumption choices. Such purchase decisions allowed participants to demonstrate another important aspect of their self-concept: their intelligence.

Although fluid compensation does not address the dimension of the self-discrepancy, it fixates consumers on another valued aspect of the self and thus protects their overall self-worth (for discussion, see Heine et al. 2006). Rather than focus on where one's current identity falls short of one's desired identity, one focuses on aspects of the identity where self-discrepancies do not exist.

Dissociation

Dissociation refers to consumer behavior that involves actively reducing the importance of the identity called into question by the self-discrepancy

by discounting or distancing oneself from that identity. In the context of the failure of the GMAT, Sam might give up altogether on identifying as a future business leader. Put simply, Sam might conclude that being a business leader is not important. As a result, Sam might strategically shift consumption away from anything related to that identity. Sam might actively avoid, for instance, trade publications related to business school, study sessions for the GMAT, or business school apparel.

White and Argo (2009) provide evidence for compensatory consumption in the form of dissociation. White and Argo examined how men and women responded to a self-discrepancy in their gender identity. In one experiment, gender identity was threatened by having participants read an article about how their gender performed worse on intelligence-based tasks in the workplace compared to the other gender.² Specifically, White and Argo examined participants' preferences for a gender-neutral magazine over gendered-identity magazines. Participants who scored low on collective self-esteem – a dimension that predisposes individuals to perceive a discrepancy with their gender identity in the face of negative feedback – were more likely to choose a gender-neutral magazine over a gendered magazine. Put differently, participants appeared to actively shy away from consumption related to the discrepancy.

Compensatory consumption in the form of dissociation might be effective because it reduces either the salience and/or the importance of the discrepancy. Functionally, a dissociation of the self from the dimension of the self-discrepancy affords the ability to protect oneself from negative consequences associated with not successfully fulfilling that identity.

Escapism

Escapism involves the use of consumption as a means to forget about or distract oneself from the discrepancy. As an example of escapism, Sam might deal with the failure on the practice GMAT by stopping by the store, buying a deep-dish pizza, a bag of barbeque potato chips, and a pint of double fudge brownie ice cream. None of these items would serve to respond to the discrepancy or to affirm another valued aspect of Sam's identity. However, the consumption of these items would be hedonically

² This example of a self-threat is categorized in the literature as a "valence threat," in which a negative valence is associated with the focal identity, such as a female identity (White and Argo 2009; for discussion see Angle and Forehand 2016). Although it is possible for a consumer to engage in dissociation after a "strength threat" (Spangenberg and Angle, Chapter 13 in this volume), to date researchers appear to have focused on valence threats when it comes to dissociation.

enjoyable and could distract Sam from ruminating about the poor performance on the exam.

The idea of escapism is captured by Heatherton and Baumeister (1991). In this work, the authors argued that people can escape from their negative self-awareness by narrowing attention to their immediate environment and engaging in binge-eating behaviors of often hedonic foods. Escapism can also involve less pleasurable experiences, but which also facilitate escape from self-awareness. For example, Polivy et al. (1994) found that participants who were anxious about preparing and delivering an upcoming speech consumed a higher amount of both good-tasting and bad-tasting cookies, compared with participants who were not preparing for an upcoming speech.

Although escapism does not resolve the self-discrepancy, it might be effective because it prevents people from ruminating on the self-discrepancy (see also Lisjak et al. 2015). As the self-discrepancy becomes less salient, the need to resolve it subsides as well. See Table 12.1 for additional

Table 12.1 Definitions and examples of the compensatory consumption behaviors

Behavior	Definition	Example in the domain of social belonging
Direct resolution	Behavior aimed at improving on the domain of the self-discrepancy	A person who experiences a lack of social belonging might join a book club to make new friends
Symbolic self-completion	Behavior aimed at acquiring symbolic markers in the domain of the self-discrepancy	A person who experiences a lack of social belonging might purchase university apparel to signal in-group affiliation
Fluid compensation	Behavior aimed at acquiring symbolic markers in an identity-relevant domain outside of the self-discrepancy	A person who experiences a lack of social belonging might purchase a Rolex watch to signal social status
Dissociation	Behavior aimed at reducing the importance of the self-discrepancy	A person who experiences a lack of social belonging might actively avoid social situations as making new friends is no longer important
Escapism	Behavior aimed at distracting oneself from ruminating on the self-discrepancy	A person who experiences a lack of social belonging might watch reruns of <i>The Office</i> and binge eat a pint of Ben & Jerry's ice cream

examples of each of the five compensatory consumption behaviors in the domain of social belonging.

Prevalence

Most research on compensatory consumption has focused on laboratory experiments. This can lead one to wonder how “real” a phenomenon compensatory consumption is outside the lab. Put simply, does compensatory consumption actually occur “in the wild?” In response to this question, we discuss both a recent survey we undertook as well as research efforts to explore compensatory consumption phenomena outside of the lab environment.

First, we conducted a survey with 122 participants via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Our approach was simple; we described each of the five compensatory consumption strategies previously discussed: direct resolution, symbolic self-completion, fluid compensation, dissociation and escapism. We asked half of the participants whether they personally had ever engaged in such behavior, and we asked the other half of the participants whether they had ever observed another person engage in such behavior. The results are presented in Figure 12.1. We found that for most of the strategies described, individuals largely reported that they had engaged in such behavior or that they had observed others engage in such behavior. In fact, the lowest frequency of engaging in a strategy was the use of symbolic self-completion for the self, and this was still reported to be have done by 66 percent of participants. These data suggest to us that, far from being an artifact of the lab, compensatory consumption is a phenomenon that people both engage in and observe others doing. In addition, the only noticeable difference between self and others was that people believed others engaged in symbolic-self completion more than they did. One possible reason for this is that symbolic self-completion is viewed as less desirable, and thus people are less likely to admit to, or actually use, this strategy.

Second, while much of research on compensatory consumption has used laboratory studies, several findings exist in field settings. Perhaps the most well-known example of compensatory consumption in the field comes from Wicklund and Gollwitzer (1982), who reported that male MBA students who had an incomplete business leader identity – for example, low Grade Point Average (GPA) in the MBA program, fewer job offers – were more likely to display symbolic markers of belonging in the business community such as a luxury watch and short, well-groomed hair. Relatedly, Angle and Forehand (2016) found that after e-mailing a request to loyal university donors to assess interest in receiving an invitation for

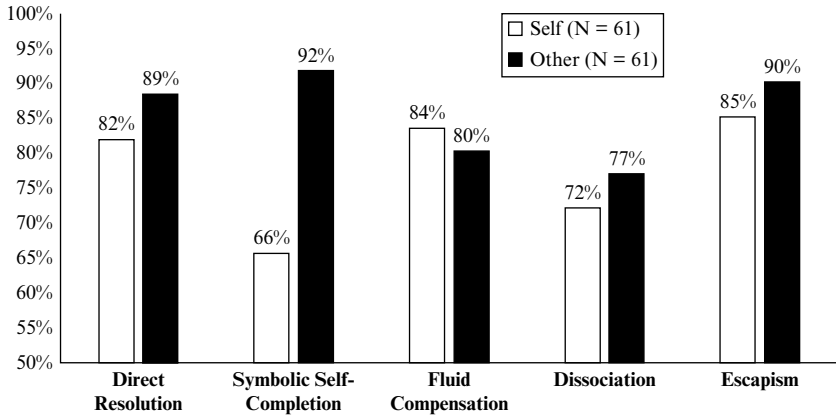


Figure 12.1 Participants' self-report of use and observation of compensatory compensation

an alumni event, alumni were more compliant with the request when it contained self-threat (versus no self-threat) information. Elsewhere, consistent with the idea of escapism, Cornil and Chandon (2013) found that after individuals' sports team lost, they were more likely to consume foods higher in calories and saturated fat compared to when their team won. Similarly, research utilizing in-depth interviews found that men and women report in engaging in compensatory consumption (see Holt and Thompson 2004; Woodruffe 1997). Thus, when taken together, it seems the phenomenon of compensatory consumption is one that consumers can identify with and can be observed outside of laboratory settings.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN THE STUDY OF COMPENSATORY CONSUMPTION

At present, researchers have documented the occurrence of compensatory consumption in five distinct forms. However, considerably less research exists that outlines when each of the compensatory consumption strategies is preferred, following a self-discrepancy. In this final section, we discuss initial efforts in this area as well as future directions.

Direct Versus Indirect Strategies

One important question is to understand when one engages in direct efforts to solve the cause of the self-discrepancy (that is, direct resolution)

versus indirect efforts that do not resolve the self-discrepancy per se (for example, fluid compensation). We suspect that this decision rests, in part, on whether the focal individual appraises the self-discrepancy as an opportunity to improve, or attributes the self-discrepancy to their more general self-worth. Namely, one might engage in direct resolution when they view a self-discrepancy as an opportunity for self-improvement; however, they might use the more indirect methods when they are focused on the general threat to their self-worth. Consistent with this observation, two identified moderators of the use of different strategies are the role of self-acceptance and the psychological distance between oneself and the experience that causes the self-discrepancy.

Self-acceptance is accepting oneself even when deficits in traits, abilities or social needs exist (Chamberlain and Haaga 2001). When self-acceptance is present, a consumer might engage in direct resolution because their general self-worth is not under threat. That is, they are less threatened by negative feedback about the self and can engage in adaptive behavior to improve the self. Consistent with this idea, Kim and Gal (2014) had participants write about either an incidence in which they engaged in self-acceptance (that is, self-acceptance condition) or their last trip to the grocery store (that is, control condition). Participants were then instructed to recall a prior experience in which they had low power, or to write about the room around them. In response to a deficit in power, participants were more likely to purchase a book to directly resolve their self-deficit: *Power and Influence for Dummies*. However, this only occurred when they had previously engaged in self-acceptance. When self-acceptance was absent, participants were more likely to purchase a book called *Elite Traveler*, consistent with symbolic self-completion.

Another trigger of different forms of compensatory consumption appears to be whether people experience, or merely anticipate the possibility of, a self-discrepancy. Kim and Rucker (2012) found evidence that when people merely anticipated the possibility of a self-discrepancy (that is, they might perform poorly on a test of intelligence) they engaged in consumption that might aid their performance. Such consumption could be viewed as compatible with the idea of participants seeing an opportunity for self-improvement. However, individuals did not engage in simple distraction or escapism. Specifically, in one experiment (Kim and Rucker 2012, Experiment 2) individuals were told that they would take a test, where failure was indicative of poor cognitive abilities. When participants were given the opportunity to listen to music prior to the test, they listened to music longer when the music was framed as being meant to facilitate learning (that is, direct resolution) as opposed to music that would help them relax (that is, escapism). In contrast, when participants first completed

the test and were given feedback that they had failed, participants listened to music meant to facilitate learning and relaxation equally. Kim and Rucker suggested that whereas people might use direct resolution more than escapism prior to a self-discrepancy, in the heat of a self-discrepancy individuals might use whatever strategy is available to them.

These examples suggest that when one appraises the self-discrepancy as an opportunity to improve the self, rather than as an indication of low self-worth, one is more likely to engage in direct resolution strategies to fix the problem directly. However, when a consumer attributes the deficit to the self, they might be amenable to palliative compensatory consumption strategies, such as symbolic self-completion or escapism. Future work could also explore when each of the indirect, palliative compensatory consumption strategies (that is, symbolic self-completion, fluid compensation, dissociation and escapism) are pursued.

Availability and Accessibility of Compensatory Consumption Strategies

The type of compensatory consumption strategy that people engage in also relates to the strategies available. For example, Stone et al. (1997) had participants outline a speech for an AIDS prevention program which stressed the importance of regular condom use. To induce a self-discrepancy, participants wrote about personal past excuses for not using condoms. When participants had the option of bolstering another aspect of the self by donating to the homeless (that is, fluid compensation), 83 percent of participants did so following a self-discrepancy. However, when participants had the additional option of purchasing condoms (that is, direct resolution), 78 percent purchased condoms and only 13 percent donated to the homeless. Participants appeared to strategically alter their behavior based on the strategies available to them. Interestingly, in this research there appeared to be a hierarchy in strategies chosen: direct resolution appeared to be preferred over strategies that maintained the discrepancy but reduced the dissonance associated with it (that is, fluid compensation).

The type of compensatory consumption strategy may also depend on the accessibility of compensatory consumption strategies based on consumers' own prior experiences as well as individual differences between consumers. Take the case of failing an exam. If a person learned during childhood that studying leads to improved test performance, then they may prioritize direct resolution. However, if a person learned during childhood that success was unlikely regardless of effort invested in studying, then they may prioritize more palliative compensatory consumption strategies, such as escapism by playing video games. In support of this, childhood

experiences, such as level of financial resources available as a child, influences how one responds to discrepancies in economic wealth as an adult (Griskevicius et al. 2013). Participants who came from resource-rich childhoods were more likely to engage in direct resolution (that is, saving money) when confronted with recessionary cues. In contrast, participants who came from resource-poor childhoods were more likely to engage in symbolic self-completion (that is, status consumption) by bolstering their financial image rather than directly increasing their economic standing. Future work should examine additional prior experiences that influence the accessibility and selection of compensatory consumption strategies.

CONCLUSION

The self-concept helps people to understand who they are. However, in some cases the very nature of the self is besieged, and people experience discrepancies between who they are and who they want to be. These discrepancies often motivate people to engage in efforts to resolve the discrepancy. Importantly, this need for self-verification can lead people to engage in one or more compensatory consumption strategies: direct resolution, symbolic self-completion, fluid compensation, escapism or dissociation. These strategies are distinct in form, yet each has the potential to help aid the consumer in responding to the discrepancy. Moreover, rather than artifacts of laboratory settings, the layperson reports both engaging in and observing compensatory consumption. The stage appears set for additional research on the topic of identity and compensation consumption for years to come.

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13. Associations matter: revisiting the threat typology model

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Identity is broadly defined as “any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 312). Thus, any information or situation with negative implications for a category label with which one self-identifies is a potential identity threat. Scholars have studied threats to nationality (White and Argo 2009), body image (Argo and Dahl 2018), university affiliation (White et al. 2018), power (Mandel et al. 2017), gender (White and Argo 2009), intelligence (Gao et al. 2009), health-consciousness (Sinha 2015) and many other aspects of self-identity. Scholars have also theorized classification systems for identity threat according to the nature of the response outcome (for example, behavioral versus cognitive response; Blanz et al. 1998), the type of coping mechanism initiated (for example, problem-focused versus emotion-focused; Han et al. 2015) or the status of the target in a social structure (for example, one’s standing within a group; Branscombe et al. 1999).

The mechanisms activated by identity threats hinge on two key principles: identity association and identity verification (Reed et al. 2012). Identity association holds that when an identity is positively regarded, any stimulus associated with it will be positively evaluated. Furthermore, once an identity becomes salient, the identity verification principle predicts that people will continuously monitor the extent to which their behaviors align with that identity (Reed et al. 2012). People seek consistency between their behavior and whatever identity is currently salient. When a salient identity is threatened, people act to validate that identity. Specifically, when their identity is threatened, people engage in either approach or avoidance behaviors, and the direction of response depends on the self–category label association that the threat targets. A threat can target existing associations between the self and a category label, or associations of a category label with valence (Angle et al. 2013; Angle and Forehand 2016). The notion that identity threats target specific associations held in memory comes from research on associative network models of memory (e.g., Keller 1993) and the unified theory of implicit social cognition (Connors and Perkins, Chapter 7 in this volume; Greenwald et al. 2002). In these frameworks, an identity is conceptualized as a triad of links between the self, a category

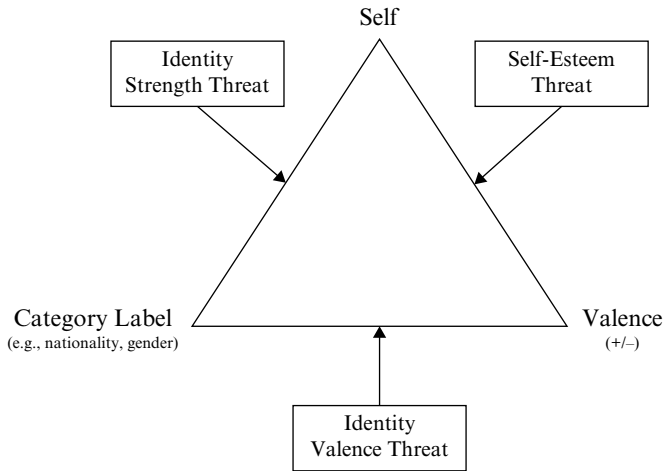


Figure 13.1 Threat typology model

label and valence. The threat typology model (TTM) builds from these frameworks to address identity threat. Identity valence threats target the connection between a particular category label and valence (for example, men are bad). Identity strength threats, on the other hand, threaten the association of the self with a category label and make no reference to valence (for example, you are not manly). Self-esteem threats directly challenge the association of self with positive valence (for example, you are bad).

This perspective has come to be known as the threat typology model (see Figure 13.1). The TTM offers a useful framework not only for classifying identity threats, but also for generating testable predictions of threat response. Critical to the TTM is the concept of balance-congruity, adapted from the long tradition of cognitive consistency models (e.g., Festinger 1957; Heider 1958; Greenwald et al. 2002). Balance-congruity holds that balance must be maintained within any triad of associations. When an identity threat pressures a specific association in a triad, predictable responses to restore balance can be expected (Angle et al. 2013; Connors and Perkins, Chapter 7 in this volume; Greenwald et al. 2002).

A wealth of research on identity threat has been conducted since the TTM model was published. This chapter reviews the recently published identity threat literature from a TTM perspective to examine whether it remains a useful framework for understanding identity threat. We find that the TTM is well supported by the body of recent findings. However, important incongruities provide opportunities to advance identity threat

research and practice. The discrepancies we observe in the literature largely arise from the emergence of novel moderators that highlight boundary conditions of the TTM. We observe two primary areas where observed results deviate from TTM predictions: (1) situations in which multiple identities are operating in concert; and (2) situations involving public versus private dynamics. We suggest investigating these areas to refine and extend the TTM. Since consumer responses to identity threats involve either approach or avoidance, it is vital for marketing practitioners to grasp the underlying principles of the threat typology model. Accordingly, we highlight innovative and actionable identity threat applications for marketers.

IDENTITY VALENCE THREAT

The identity verification principle states that “individuals seek validation on how they are enacting a particular identity . . . relative to the environment” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 317). Environmental cues do not always validate one’s identity; rather, they sometimes threaten that identity. Many studies operationalize identity threat with a presentation of negative information related to a particular category label such as nationality, college affiliation or profession. Identity valence threats cast an entire group in a negative light. For example, if we conceptualize a balanced triad of associations between the self and accounting, accounting and positive valence, and the self and positive valence, information describing the inferior interpersonal skills of accountants would constitute an identity valence threat (White et al. 2018). The content of the threat pressures the association of the category label (accountant) with positive valence, and the most common response is avoidance behavior. Individuals distance themselves from the threatened identity by eschewing things that signal category label, such as identity-linked products (Angle and Forehand 2016; White and Argo 2009). In White et al. (2018), threatened participants preferred a neutral reward versus one that displayed their accounting identity. Avoidance reflects a weakening of the association between the self and accounting, and a shift in association strength restores balance to the triad.

Under certain conditions, people respond to the threat through counterargument or derogation of the threat’s source. For example, threatened group members may disparage characteristics of an out-group to defend the value of their in-group (Kteily et al. 2016; Sanderson 2013). This effect is more prominent in individuals who strongly identify with the threatened in-group and are unwilling or unable to distance themselves from the in-group. Here the association of self with the threatened identity is

strong and impervious to threat, and balance within the triad is preserved. Similarly, an alternative form of avoidance is to counterargue the threatening information, thereby maintaining balance (Eisenstadt et al. 2006). Both of these responses are more likely when the threatened identity is highly valued.

When there is no opportunity to counterargue or derogate the source of the threat, however, consumers revert to distancing themselves from the threatened identity. For example, Korean study participants received negative information about Samsung (that is, a product “Made in Korea”). Subsequently, they were more likely to criticize products associated with an out-group (that is, products “Made in the USA”), while their opinions of the in-group product remained unchanged (Chae et al. 2017). Importantly, this effect was only observed when the source of the threat was an out-group member (non-Korean). When the negative information came from an in-group member (Korean), participants were unable to derogate the source of the threat without also derogating the self as an extension of the group. Thus, they instead adjusted their beliefs about the in-group product downward.

Identity valence threats can also manifest in social comparisons, particularly comparisons that activate stereotypes. For example, a common stereotype is that women are inferior to men in technology-related fields. As such, an advertisement for a technology product featuring a female endorser was threatening for female participants, because the advertisement made gender salient and activated that negative stereotype. The presence of a negative stereotype about their gender prompted female participants to avoid the technology aspect of their identity. The result was lower collective self-esteem and more negative attitudes toward technology products among female participants (Dimofte et al. 2015).

Attempts to distance the self from the threatened identity protect the self. In addition to avoidance effects, people can create distance between the self and the threatened identity through motivated forgetting, a self-protective behavior in which people suppress unwanted memories. To study this, researchers showed participants university-linked advertisements and then had them read either negative or neutral information about their university. Participants who read the negative news about their university exhibited motivated forgetting, a psychological defense mechanism, and were more likely to forget promotional information from these advertisements than were participants who read the neutral university news (Dalton and Huang 2014).

Critically, threat response can extend beyond self-protection to self-destruction. Research on weight stigma provides evidence of self-destruction as a threat response. Weight stigma is an identity threat in

which overweight people are confronted with the negative implications of their weight (for example, stereotypes, prejudice) (Major and O'Brien 2005; Puhl and Latner 2007). Weight stigma can produce coping behaviors, including disordered eating and excessive physical exercise (Hand et al. 2017). These unhealthy behaviors represent efforts to distance the self from the overweight identity. Similarly, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people exhibited dangerous behaviors, including delaying healthcare and lying to a physician after being notified of the high prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases and sexuality-based stereotypes in the LGBTQ community (Fingerhut and Abdou 2017). Interestingly, situations in which identity threat responses become self-destructive often relate to important societal issues such as public health.

IDENTITY STRENGTH THREAT

Another category of identity threat is information that targets the strength of the association of self with a particular category label, be it a group or an attribute. These identity strength threats call into question whether an individual is a valid member of a group, or casts doubt upon whether the individual exhibits a particular attribute. In either case, no mention of the category label's valence is made. Most studies on identity strength threats have observed approach behaviors from threatened participants, suggesting a desire to re-establish association with that identity (Angle and Forehand 2016; Ward and Dahl 2014). In Angle and Forehand (2016), members of a university alumni association who felt threatened by communication that questioned the strength of their affiliation with the university were more interested in attending future university events in an effort to reassert the threatened identity than non-threatened members.

Identity threat studies in the luxury retail context find a similar response pattern. Consumers in a luxury store experienced a threat to their social status when a salesperson suggested they were unworthy of shopping at a high-end establishment. In response to this threat, participants' willingness to pay for and attitude towards the luxury brand actually increased (Ward and Dahl 2014). The results are consistent with the notion that the salesperson's threat targeted an inconsistency between the consumer's ideal self (high class, luxury shopper) and actual self (middle class, not a luxury shopper). To resolve this inconsistency, consumers engaged in compensatory consumption, buying more luxury items (Rucker and Cannon, Chapter 12 in this volume). Within the threat typology model, compensatory consumption is a manifestation of approach behavior: consumers purchase or use products to reduce a self-discrepancy (Mandel et

al. 2017). Ward and Dahl's (2014) finding is perhaps counterintuitive, given that salespeople are generally lower in the socio-economic hierarchy than the average consumer in a luxury store; however, salespeople were still able to threaten the customers' affiliation with high class by insinuating they did not seem like the sort of people who should shop at a luxury store. Identity strength threats can occur with more subtle manipulations as well. When students were forced to represent their university with a faded version of its logo, they felt threatened and responded by disparaging an out-group (Matherly and Ghosh 2017). The out-group disparagement provides a means of re-establishing the self-university association.

The strength with which a person holds an identity also predicts identity-oriented behaviors. According to the threat typology model, stronger identity associations predict more vigorous responses to threat (Angle and Forehand 2016). A recent study of law students found that responses to threat differed depending on students' commitment to the lawyer identity. Students who were only weakly committed to the lawyer identity did not exhibit self-symbolizing in response to either related or unrelated self-threats. However, after being presented with a related self-threat (that is, scoring low on a personality characteristic important for lawyers), law school students who were strongly committed to the lawyer identity reasserted their commitment to their lawyer identity by pursuing lawyer-relevant qualifications, skills and material possessions (that is, self-symbolizing) to a greater extent than did students who were weakly committed to being a lawyer (Gollwitzer et al. 2012). Strongly committed students who were presented with an unrelated self-threat restored their self-worth more generally, in dimensions unrelated to being a lawyer.

Research on the interplay between multiple identities offers insight to possible explanations of these results (Reed and Forehand 2016). A threat to any single identity is weaker if a person has other identities to which they can turn for affirmation (Gao et al. 2009). Thus, the law students who weakly identified with being a lawyer likely had other identities to turn to when their lawyer identity was threatened.

Gift-giving also presents manifestations of identity strength threat, as the association of the self with a particular category label can be threatened by giving or receiving an identity-linked gift. For example, participants who were forced to give an identity-threatening gift (for example, a mug from an opposing school) to another person were more likely to act in ways that reasserted their own identity (Ward and Broniarczyk 2011). In addition to inducing identity strength threat, gift-giving can also be an effective means of coping with a threat. Klein et al. (2015) studied the phenomenon of gift-giving among prisoners in World War II concentration camps. Giving gifts to one another constituted a means of reasserting prisoners' associa-

tion with specific groups, be they fellow Jews or fellow human beings, and historical records show that prisoners took extreme risks to give gifts to each other (Klein et al. 2015). The identity-based motivation the authors propose is consistent with identity verification and identity strength threat, in that the wretched conditions of imprisonment posed a threat to prisoners' humanity, essentially stripping away all social identities.

SELF-ESTEEM THREAT

The threat typology model focuses primarily on identity valence and identity strength threats, but offers little discussion and few examples of direct self-esteem threats. A challenge of investigating self-esteem threats is that they are difficult to isolate. There are, however, situations in which self-esteem is directly threatened without involving a category label. For example, people experience threat when addressed by the wrong name, an action that targets neither identity valence nor identity strength. When called an incorrect name by a brand, consumers reported feeling disrespected, unappreciated, worthless and unimportant, and they were significantly less likely to purchase the brand's product in the future (Rank-Christman et al. 2017). In addition, misidentified customers were more likely to seek out personalized products, perhaps in an effort to restore threatened self-esteem. These brand avoidance behaviors could be interpreted as a similar mechanism to counterargument: an effort to maintain balance and protect the association of self with positive valence. Similarly, Trudel et al. (2016) found that discarding identity-linked products in the trash can posed an identity threat. Participants were more likely to recycle, rather than throw away, an item labeled with their name. The authors concluded that it is less threatening to dispose of an identity-linked product in the recycle bin as compared to the trash can (Trudel et al. 2016). This finding is consistent with the threat typology model, because throwing a product associated with the self in the trash challenges the association of self with positive valence. The recycling option was more attractive because it was less threatening to the self.

Finally, the notion of mortality salience as a self-esteem threat is particularly interesting. Mortality salience is a threat that disrupts the relation of the self to the external world (Heine et al. 2006). Though mortality salience scholars primarily refer to the connections between things as "relations," the term "association" can be used interchangeably. On one hand, mortality salience does not threaten an identifiable aspect of the self. On the other hand, mortality salience disrupts one's entire existence, essentially threatening all of one's identities simultaneously, for if a person

ceases to exist, neither can any of that person's identities. Responses to mortality threats mirror the approach behaviors that are typically observed in response to identity strength threat. Han et al. (2015) find that mortality salience threats activate approach motivations and problem-focused coping, whereby participants focus on taking actions that can improve their situation or change their behavior to reduce felt stress. Another study found that mortality salience increased engagement in health-oriented behaviors and greater fitness intentions (Arndt et al. 2003). This effect was particularly strong among individuals for whom fitness was an important aspect of their self-esteem. This moderation effect is consistent with the TTM, which suggests that people who are more committed to an identity respond to threats with greater intensity (Angle and Forehand 2016). Additional research is needed to fully illuminate the similarities and differences between response mechanisms across the mortality salience and identity threat paradigms.

OPPORTUNITIES TO REFINE AND EXTEND THE THREAT TYPOLOGY MODEL

In reviewing the recent identity threat literature, we find several opportunities to refine and extend the threat typology model. Broadly, we observe two primary areas in which observed results deviate from TTM predictions: (1) situations in which multiple identities are operating in concert; and (2) situations involving public versus private dynamics. Advances in threat typologies, whether they build from the TTM or not, should carefully consider both of these factors.

Multiple Identities Operating in Concert

Though many identity threat investigations focus on a single identity, most real-world situations involve multiple identities operating at the same time. In its original conception, the TTM considered singular, isolated identities, yet more recent work highlights the importance of considering the broad range of identities operating in any particular situation and the dynamics between those identities (Reed and Forehand 2016).

Identity integration

Identity integration occurs when one holds multiple social identities, and threat responses vary with the strength of association one has with each separate identity (Reed and Forehand 2016). A useful illustration is bicultural identity integration (BII), a measure of one's strength of

association with multiple cultural identities at a given time (Mok and Morris 2013). People with high BII view their multiple cultural identities as cohesive, or integrated; whereas people with low BII view them in conflict. Using an identity strength threat paradigm, Mok and Morris threatened participants' cultural identity, and only high BII participants engaged in approach behavior consistent with TTM. In contrast, low BII participants experienced a greater threat to their self-group identity and avoided the identity. The authors posit that people high in BII do not actually experience a threat to a specific cultural identity, because they strongly associate with multiple cultural identities. This reliance on other cultural identities is similar to the activation of multiple identities observed by White et al. (2012). Further, as Reed and Forehand (2016) note, the reality of social interaction is that multiple identities are almost always activated and operating in concert. Understanding these dynamic identity systems should be a focus of future research.

Self-construal

In studying a form of identity valence threat – the negative ranking of participants' university – White et al. (2012) demonstrated a moderating effect of self-construal (that is, the extent to which one is interconnected with or distinct from others). Specifically, those with an independent self-construal avoided identity-linked products when an identity was threatened, a result consistent with the TTM. However, participants with an interdependent self-construal who were threatened in the same way exhibited approach behaviors (that is, exhibiting positive attitudes toward identity-linked products). The authors suggest that this is because in the face of a threat interdependents are better able to access other social identities that fulfill their need to belong. The notion of accessing multiple social identities in the face of threat needs further study, and consideration of the fundamental processes at work in the interplay between multiple identities (Reed and Forehand 2016). There may be other individual difference or situational variables that drive activation of alternative identities. Further, we wonder whether changes in the associations of the self and various identities can be observed and quantified using the TTM paradigm.

Public Versus Private Scenarios

The threat typology model also does not explicitly address differences between public and private threats. However, the social dynamics involved in threat and response are an emergent area of promising research.

Public self-awareness

Another interesting moderator is public self-awareness, which occurs when an individual learns that aspects of the self are on public display (Crisp and Turner 2014). Using an identity valence threat paradigm, researchers threatened participants' university identity by highlighting the poor performance of their university. When this threat was read aloud (that is, public condition), participants were more likely to reinforce associations with that identity; when the threat was made in private, however, participants disassociated themselves from the threatened identity (White et al. 2018). This form of identity verification appears to hinge on the presence of other people. Similarly, consumers avoided out-group-related products only when others could view their behavior (White and Dahl 2006). The social dynamics of identity threat were not explicitly considered in the TTM, and highlight the need to more fully understand how public and private threats affect different associations held in memory.

Self-authenticity

Another area of emergent research on identity threats is self-authenticity. Generally, self-authenticity is a feeling of alignment between one's values and one's behaviors (Stryker et al. 2000). When forced to conform to others' expectations or demands, feelings of inauthenticity arise, which decrease self-esteem and life satisfaction (Kernis and Goldman 2005; Sheldon and Kasser 1995). Since a key component of authenticity is the freedom to express one's values and personal motives, we would expect identity strength threats to arise when one's expressions are at odds with the current environment. We suggest that the effects of the threat could be moderated by public self-awareness, and this raises the question of whether feelings of inauthenticity are present in the absence of others. If so, behavioral responses would differ. Future research can provide greater understanding of the behavioral responses to inauthenticity and the mechanisms through which they operate.

Innovative Study Design

More identity threat studies are employing innovative interventions and offering opportunities to isolate specific aspects of the threat response mechanism. In a particularly innovative study, identity threat was induced by increasing the processing fluency of a chosen identity signal. When participants were asked to represent their university identity with a blurry or faded image of their alma mater, they experienced identity strength threat (Matherly and Ghosh 2017). In identity verification terms, the blurry image was unable to externally validate the university identity, and

thus consumers responded in alternative self-validating ways (for example, derogating other universities), consistent with the principle of identity verification (Reed et al. 2012). This represents an especially promising domain for additional study, since consumers are constantly faced with choices about how to display important identity signals through various online social media platforms. If companies can effectively utilize this threat, they can increase purchases from consumers seeking to validate a threatened identity. Another clever study was conducted by Outten et al. (2012). They made white Americans feel threatened by showing them projected demographic data of a future time when whites would no longer be the numerical majority, threatening the association of the self with being American. This threat increased white participants' anger towards current ethnic minorities as well as their general sympathy for in-group members.

CONCLUSION

The threat typology model (Angle et al. 2013) presents a conceptualization of identity threat grounded in both identity association and identity verification principles (Reed et al. 2012). The core insight of this model is that threats are best understood in terms of the associations they target: between the self and valence, the self and a category label, or a category label and valence. Our review of the research published since release of the TTM found many studies confirming the predictions of the model, and surfaced several opportunities for further development and refinement. On balance, we maintain our perspective about the importance of specific associations in understanding threat. Identifying the specific association targeted by a threat typically guides predictions of the nature and magnitude of response, which can inform marketing decisions, public policy, coping strategies and other downstream considerations. Ultimately, aspects of the social environment (for example, brands, friends) influence consumer responses to threat, and people will either approach or avoid brands to verify their relation to a threatened self-identity.

Most of the recent findings that do not conform to the predictions of the threat typology model diverge in response to previously unidentified moderating factors. Critical opportunities for refinement and extension of the TTM include situations in which threat response is different in public versus in private, as well as instances where people can simultaneously activate multiple identities. These discrepancies provide exciting opportunities for the advancement of our understanding of identity threat.

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14. Memory pointers and identity

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People use their accumulated experiences as a way to establish and verify their identities. Over the course of their lives, people build up a portfolio of experiences that comes to make up who they are. But it is not just the experiences one has; possibly more important are the memories of these experiences, and the tangible reminders that help protect them, that help to shape one's identity.

Imagine that your house is on fire; what is the first thing you grab? Back in the old days, it was often a family photograph album or heirloom, a powerful memory pointer that you held dear and wanted to safeguard for posterity. Today, you probably grab your phone. Not only to call the fire department, but because your phone commonly contains most of your photos, and losing those photos would feel like losing a part of yourself. We refer to items such as souvenirs, and photos that people accumulate because they believe these items will help them retrieve their memories later as “memory pointers” (Zauberman et al. 2009). For example, in order to remember a particular concert, one may take a photo of the band on stage, buy a shirt of the concert tour, or keep the concert ticket stub. Memory pointers are items that are acquired or retained with the specific intention to be consumed at a later point in time.

When acquiring such memory pointers, people may do so either to keep these photos or objects just for themselves or to show them to others (for example, in person, on social media). Specifically, we classify two types of memory pointers that can establish and verify one's identity: (1) the accumulated stock of objects or photos intended for remembering the experience oneself; and (2) the accumulated stock of objects or photos intended for sharing the experience with others.

Regardless of the specific intentions, photos of an experience generally must be taken during the experience (for example, while the band is on stage), whereas objects may be acquired during the experience or after the experience has concluded (for example, ordering a shirt from the band's web page). After the experience has concluded, both photos and objects may be used to revisit the memories of a particular experience by oneself or by sharing them with others. In doing so, people reinforce identities that are important to them.

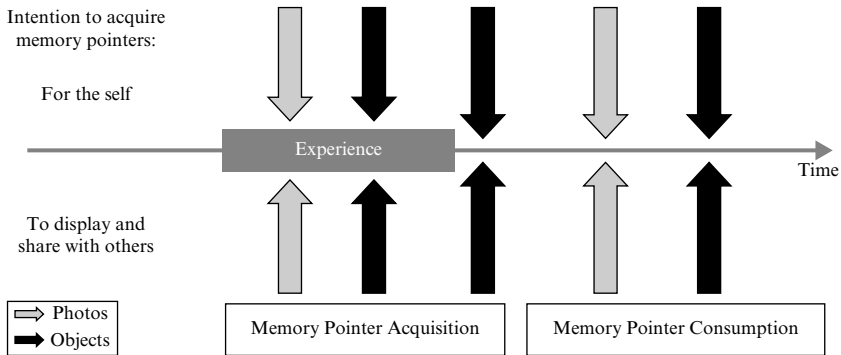


Figure 14.1 The sequence of acquiring and consuming memory pointers

In this chapter, we will discuss work that has focused on the role that memory pointers play in verifying people's identities to themselves and others. We will examine how both objects and photos act as memory pointers and allow people to revisit experiences that are important to them. Our conceptualization of the sequence of acquiring and consuming memory pointers is graphically represented in Figure 14.1 and articulated below.

IDENTITY VERIFICATION THROUGH MEMORY PROTECTION AND MEMORY POINTERS

People often like to mentally revisit their own experiences or to share their experiences with others. This may be in part to verify who they are both to themselves and to others, which allows them to reinforce their identities. Thus, these revisiting and sharing behaviors may be part of people's "identity verification" processes, namely their management and validation of behaviors that assure others, as well as themselves, of their ideal identity representation (e.g., Swann 1983, 1997; Reed et al. 2012). As such, preserving identity-relevant memory pointers is important to one's sense of self, serving as tangible verification of these identities.

While all experiences are part of one's self, some experiences, and the memories associated with them, are considered special and particularly relevant. For example, any vacation is meaningful, but one's honeymoon is special. Alternatively, you may enjoy eating out in good restaurants frequently, but the meal you had celebrating your graduation is special.

Because special experiences are central to the self and are particularly important in defining who we are, people want to remember those special

experiences in their original form to the greatest extent possible. These memories, and what they reflect about one's identity, are so important that people will even change their subsequent behaviors in order to protect these memories. For example, people think that having a lesser, more recent experience in the same location as a special experience may tarnish the memory of the original experience by overwriting all or parts of it (Zauberman et al. 2009). Therefore, they are less likely to want to engage in a lesser experience that takes place in the same location, and if they do, they want this more mundane experience to at least involve the same people. For instance, on a regular night out, people may be reluctant to dine at the same restaurant where their graduation dinner took place, and if they decide to vacation at the same resort where they once honeymooned, they do so only with that same partner.

People also hold beliefs regarding what may help them remember the experience as it was. In order to preserve the memories of their experiences and retrieve them more easily later, people often acquire tangible memory pointers that link to particular memories. Our work has examined how people select memory pointers that they expect to preserve their memories and how such pointers may influence their ability to verify that identity-relevant experience. We will discuss two forms of such tangible memory pointers: (1) keepsakes (for example, ticket stubs) and objects (for example, magnets) connected to an experience; and (2) photos that capture unique aspects of an experience.

Objects as Memory Pointers

Physical objects and possessions are central to who we are as people. Indeed, our purchases can help us to learn not only about our preferences, but also about our identities (Wu et al. 2011). The objects we acquire and own are important because they depict who we are, and they also connect us to our own past, capturing who we were (Belk 1988). Indeed, many objects that originally served a mostly utilitarian function become more valued over time for their connection to loved ones than for their functionality (for example, inherited furniture; Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981).

Memory pointers, however, are acquired and valued from the very beginning for their potential to help people remember an experience, and less for their utilitarian functions. For example, we buy a T-shirt at a concert more to remember that experience than because we need a shirt to wear. When considering memory pointers, people hold strong beliefs about what kind of objects will help them remember the experience as it really was, and thus which memory pointers may best protect their memo-

ries. Specifically, when acquiring memory pointers, people prefer objects that are uniquely linked to the experience. For example, participants in one of our studies imagined visiting a gift shop during their last day of a special vacation in Cancun. They indicated they would be more likely to buy a Mayan wooden sculpture than a limited edition CD of their favorite band, because the former is more distinctly associated with that particular experience (Zauberman et al. 2009). While one's favorite band is part of one's overall self, and helps to establish and verify one's identity in general, people do not believe that an item they can acquire in other venues would effectively trigger this specific vacation experience, and thus would not allow them to verify this particular part of one's identity. Hence, when acquiring memory pointers, people seek out items uniquely linked to a specific experience.

Photos as Memory Pointers

If people want to acquire memory pointers that are uniquely linked to an experience, photos should be the ultimate memory pointers. Even though many others have taken a picture on the Golden Gate Bridge at this very spot, my picture is the only one that I took at that particular moment. The photo I took is exceptionally special if it has my friends and I in it.

This striving for unique memory pointers may explain why so many people take photos of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* or Vincent van Gogh's *Starry Night*. One could easily buy the postcard in the gift shop or search for the image online to remember the painting. Not only would this approach be easier than battling it out with other tourists who are also trying to take a photo in the gallery, but, in all likelihood, this would also lead to a superior photo of the painting. However, that is not what people do. Why not? Because a postcard or online image is not as uniquely linked to my own experience as my photo is, particularly if it includes me. In addition, relating to ideas explaining the value of original art and the value of authentic objects more generally (e.g., Newman and Bloom 2012), the photo you take may be seen as closer to the essence of the experience at that particular point in time and space. As a result, people take their own photos as memory pointers, even if those photos are not very flattering either to their own or to *Mona Lisa's* smile.

Interestingly, the process of taking photos as a form of acquiring memory pointers provides an added bonus to people: compared to not taking photos, the act of taking photos increases engagement with and enjoyment of the experience itself (Diehl et al. 2016). For example, in a study we conducted, participants visited a museum exhibit and were equipped with special glasses that tracked their eye movements. Half of

the participants were also provided with a camera to take photos. We found that those who had a camera, and hence were actively deciding what photos to take, looked longer at the museum artifacts than those who did not have a camera. Consistent with this, those with a camera were more engaged with their museum experience, and they also reported that they enjoyed the exhibit more. Thus, the intention to acquire memory pointers to better remember the experience can actually make the original experience more enjoyable.

By focusing one's attention on the experience when taking photos, one also remembers more visual aspects of the experience. In a separate study (Barasch et al. 2017a), also conducted in a museum, participants listened to an audio guide while visiting a particular exhibit. Again, half of the participants were also provided with a camera to take photos. Later, all participants answered a surprise quiz testing their memory on what they had seen and heard at the museum exhibit. Those who had a camera during their visit remembered more of the artifacts they saw than those who did not have a camera. Moreover, those with a camera even better remembered the exhibit artifacts they had not actually taken a photo of than those without a camera. The fact that they paid more attention to visual aspects improved their visual memory overall, extending beyond the objects being photographed.

However, this boost in visual memory came at a price. Those who had a camera remembered less of what they heard from the audio guide than did those without a camera. Attention is a limited resource, so the added attention to visual cues came at the detriment of auditory cues. What these effects tell us is that the act of creating memory pointers by taking photos can actually change our experiences and our memories. Photo-taking makes positive experiences more enjoyable and causes us to remember visual aspects better, but non-visual aspects may fade into the background and become less relevant to our identity moving forward.

Do People Acquire the Right Memory Pointers?

When acquiring memory pointers, people believe that the uniqueness of those pointers and their connection to the original experience are primary over other considerations. They hold these intuitions very strongly; but are these intuitions correct, and do they actually acquire the right memory pointers (that is, those that best allow them to trigger and verify the experience later on)? The answer is sometimes, but not always.

When it comes to tangible reminders, the window of opportunity to acquire such reminders is often limited. Buying a unique souvenir, such as a Mayan statue, is generally limited to the duration of the trip. In order to

own the souvenir cup from U2's Joshua Tree Anniversary Tour with one's concert date printed on it, one has to purchase a beverage at the venue. These limited purchase opportunities make it more likely that people make a purchase during the experience, compared to situations where buying it later from the store's web page is possible (Abendroth 2011). People are also more inclined to acquire a memory pointer right then and there, even if it is more convenient to buy online later, because they believe an on-site purchase (rather than a future web order) will be better able to remind them later of the experience.

Importantly, however, whether these souvenirs actually serve as positive reminders of one's experience does not only depend on their connection to the original experience. While people focus on that unique connection to the experience when acquiring these memory pointers, their value as memory pointers also depends on how useful the object is in the long run. In one of our studies, we surveyed travelers on a ten-day cruise around Africa, both during their trip as well as three months later (Abendroth and Diehl 2006). In the short run, people were very happy with all their purchases; but in the long run they regretted having purchased items that were not useful to them in some way (for example, those they could not wear or display frequently). Looking at those less useful items actually did not bring back the happy memories of the experience in the past, but rather triggered negative thoughts about the item's present status as a dust-collector. These items turned out not to be particularly good memory pointers and, in fact, detracted from the memory of the experience.

What about photos as memory pointers? Do people take the right photos? The opportunity to take unique photos is also limited to a certain window of opportunity, as only the photos one actually takes during the experience can effectively serve as unique memory pointers. The fear of not having the perfect picture may cause people to take many shots at the same spot (for example, to avoid having someone's eyes closed). But what photos serve as good memory reminders, and do people actually take the types of photos that make for effective memory pointers?

Our data suggest that in the long run, photos that have people in them, whether of oneself or others, allow people to better relive their experiences than photos that are purely of scenery (for example, the mountain view one had) or the setting (for example, the concert stage). These findings suggest that people should make sure to take photos with people in them if they want to create effective memory pointers. However, whether they do take photos with people or photos of scenery is often determined by the experience and the situation they engage in, rather than their sense of which photos make better memory pointers. The "What You See Is All There Is" phenomenon (Kahneman and Egan 2011) and the concreteness

principle (Slovic 1972) both suggest that people attend to and process the information that is in front of them primarily in the way it is presented to them. In the context of taking photos, this means that if the experience is people-focused, people will be more likely to take photos with people, but if the experience is not people-focused, photos with people will be more scarce. For example, when people visit the Grand Canyon, the focus of the experience is an awe-inspiring natural formation, and so people return with many more photos of the canyon and rocks than of the people they were with. In one of our studies, visitors to an arboretum mostly took photos of the trees and plants, and very few photos of people, including themselves. However, in another study where we asked participants to take photos during Christmas, a holiday where the focus is on being with friends and family, people took more photos of people than of the scenery and setting, such as Christmas decorations and food.

These findings suggest that the context and the immediate environment largely determine what type of photos people take and possibly dominate the purposeful creation of memory pointers. Hence, depending on the focus of the experience (for example, people-focused versus scenery-focused), people will not necessarily end up with the best memory pointers. In fact, looking back at their photos one month later and four months later, the visitors to the arboretum liked the few people photos they had taken more than even their favorite tree picture, and indeed wished they had taken more people photos.

In sum, the experiences one accumulates are central to one's identity, and people often take effortful steps to better remember and protect these memories from degradation. What our work shows is that memory pointers, whether in the form of objects or photos, play an important role in safeguarding people's memories and hence in verifying and protecting their identities over time.

IDENTITY VERIFICATION THROUGH SHARING PHOTOS WITH OTHERS

Experiences that are central to building and verifying one's own identity are often also shared with others. Sharing with others may take two different forms. First, people can share experiences jointly with others in the moment. For example, people go to the movies with a friend or have dinner with a colleague. Compared to experiencing an event alone, jointly experiencing an event facilitates social connection with others and heightens enjoyment of the experience (e.g., Ramanathan and McGill 2007). In addition to sharing the experience itself, one can then share memories (for

example, talk about them over dinner) or memory pointers (for example, show photos) of the experience with the same people with whom one originally shared the experience.

Second, people can share experiences with others who were not present during the original experience. Telling others about an experience after it has ended can boost satisfaction with the experience (Gilovich et al. 2015) and increase feelings of closeness and trust with one's audience (Beike et al. 2016; Reis et al. 2010). Importantly, when others understand our past experiences, it also helps us to verify our own identity (Bollich et al. 2011).

When people share their experiences with others who were not there, it is often a form of impression management (Leary and Kowalski 1990); that is, people want to influence the identity they hold in the eyes of others. People increasingly curate their identity through the information and photos they share on social media (e.g., Gosling et al. 2011; Back et al. 2010). When it comes to photos, people mostly share photos that are posed, allowing them to present themselves in a certain way and to verify their identity to others (Berger and Barasch 2018). People often have a good understanding of how others perceive them, based on such shared information (Vazire and Gosling 2004). At times, however, they do not present themselves in the best possible light. For example, while people prefer sharing posed pictures, others in fact form more positive evaluations from candid pictures, which are perceived as more genuine (Berger and Barasch 2018).

While prior work has focused on the actual sharing of experiences that occurs after the experience has ended, our work has examined how the intention to share photos can affect people's experiences in the moment. Imagine an individual on a cruise to Antarctica who can share this experience with friends and family only after the trip is over (for example, when WiFi is available again). Even though the actual sharing will not happen until later, this individual likely has the sharing goal highly salient in their mind throughout the trip, and this may affect their trip experience and the types of photos they take during the trip.

Our studies reveal that when people take photos with the intention to share them with others, they enjoy the experience less than if they take photos for themselves (Barasch et al. 2017b). For example, in one study, we intercepted visitors who were in line to take a photo of the famous statue of fictional boxer Rocky Balboa, a popular photo location for tourists visiting Philadelphia. We found that visitors who were taking photos to share with others (for example, on social media) enjoyed the experience significantly less, and were less likely to recommend visiting the statue to others, compared to those who were taking photos for themselves. Thus,

anticipating sharing photos later, while engaging in the experience, undermined the experience itself.

But why is that? The answer lies in people's concerns about self-presentation. When taking photos with the intention to share, we inevitably think about what other people think about us when they see those photos. The photos we take, even if we are not actually in those photos, express our identity to others. While taking a photo of a sunset with the intention to share it with others, photo-takers contemplate whether the sunset comes across as sufficiently breathtaking and whether others will like the photo they took of it. This process can make photo-takers feel self-conscious and subsequently dampen their enjoyment of the experience itself. So while shared photos may help us define who we are to others, taking these photos may actually come at a cost in the present.

The intention to share also affects what types of photos people take and hence what type of memory pointers are available to them later on. In one of our studies, participants were asked to create photo albums with the intention to either share them with others or keep them for themselves (Barasch et al. 2017b). The albums that participants produced were markedly different, depending on these intentions. First, people who created albums to share were more likely to include photos with people in them than those who created albums for themselves. This suggests that, while having a sharing goal salient can reduce enjoyment in the moment of the experience, in the long run this goal may lead to better memory pointers (as people photos are preferred to scenery photos after the fact).

Second, however, the sharing goal affected other aspects of the albums as well. For instance, those who created albums to share included more posed photos in them, particularly of people smiling, as they wanted to show others how much fun they were having. Posed pictures, however, may be less distinctly connected to a particular experience. Think, for example, of the annual family photo in front of the Christmas tree: while those in the photo age over time, any given photo is likely harder to connect to the exact Christmas year and experience. In contrast, those who created albums for themselves included more candid photos, which may be more unique to the specific day and experience and hence better memory pointers down the road.

We also found that albums created to share contained more photos with typical Christmas symbols, such as Christmas trees, stockings and presents. That is, when sharing an experience with others, people try to tell a story or provide a context, such as when these photos were taken and at what occasion. Over time, these contextual details may also help the photo-taker to remember aspects of the experience that would have otherwise faded from memory.

In sum, people often share experiences with others who were not present during the original experience. These days, such sharing often occurs in the form of photos taken during the experience. While sharing photos may help to establish and verify one's identity with others, taking photos (and thus creating memory pointers) with that purpose in mind can alter the experience itself, as well as the types of photos one accumulates. Our findings suggest that the intention to share photos may produce memory pointers that help people to relive their experiences (that is, photos with people in them), but that this intention may also lead to more posed photos which may be less uniquely connected to the experience.

CONCLUSIONS

From the first concert we saw as teenagers, to the trips we take once our children are out of the house, to the mundane experiences in between – lunch with colleagues, cooking dinner, hitting the gym – we are the sum of our experiences. These experiences help us to establish and verify who we are both to ourselves and to others, and memory pointers in the form of objects and photos can facilitate that. Memory pointers allow us to invoke our recollection of identity-relevant experiences and to share those experiences with others. Not surprisingly, people invest significant resources in the creation and acquisition of such memory pointers. As such, understanding how these memory pointers help to verify identity is important for researchers and consumers alike.

While our discussion has focused on tangible objects and photos as memory pointers, other types of memory pointers certainly exist. For example, while photos capture only visual aspects, videos also capture auditory aspects of the experience. Memories associated with the particular aspects that are captured may get weighed more heavily when revisiting an experience, while aspects that are not captured may be ignored or forgotten. For example, a photo of a sunset on the beach cues the visual aspects (for example, colors, birds) of that experience more strongly than it cues the sound of the waves and wind, and thus this auditory aspect of the experience may become lost from memory over time. While other aspects, beyond visual and auditory, are currently difficult to capture (for example, the smell of a room, the taste of a dessert, the touch of a pet), future technology may allow us to capture experiences even more fully, which will impact the function of memory pointers. Revisiting an experience that is captured in a richer, more multidimensional way (for example, via virtual reality) may provide a more comprehensive account of the experience and hence may be better at cueing the desired memory. At the same time, one's own memories

are not complete accounts of the experience to begin with, and over time, memories of an experience may further deviate from what memory pointers capture and replay, particularly if those pointers become more inclusive. For example, one may remember one's first wedding dance as a flawless and touching performance that all guests were paying attention to, but a non-edited wedding video may paint a very different picture. It is thus possible that more comprehensive accounts render the revisiting experience more unpleasant and disconcerting, or may even clash with one's identity, while less comprehensive memory pointers (for example, a photo of the dance, the song itself) remain more malleable and interpretable, and may thus be experienced more positively and in line with one's memory.

We have primarily discussed memory pointers as triggers that immediately and strongly conjure memories from a particular experience in our lives. However, over time, not every memento and photo may actually do that. For example, we may need to carefully think and use other cues to remember where we acquired a particular item (for example, where we bought a certain painting that we have on the wall) or when a particular photo was taken. In those cases, memory pointers are not very effective shortcuts to one's memories, but more of a puzzle that we work through to construct to link to a particular experience. Solving that experiential puzzle may actually be rewarding in and of itself, as one travels back in time and possibly revisits different past experiences. However, not being able to solve that puzzle could lead to strong negative feelings and possible devaluation of one's experiences. People may find it upsetting if they feel as though they are forgetting an important part of their life or identity. To some extent, technology may help solve this puzzle and boost our memories of past experiences by capturing particular location and timing data (for example, geo tags, time stamp) that allow us to better pinpoint our past experiences. Using image recognition technology, Google and Facebook may be able to remind us who the people are in a photo, even if we do not remember their names any more, thus providing additional clues that allow us to recall and connect that experience to our past and present identities.

Technology may also help us to curate the many individual memory pointers we acquire over time. Each day, 1.2 billion photos and videos are uploaded to Google Photos for safekeeping (Sabharwal 2017). However, most of these preciously safeguarded photos will likely not be used for their intended purpose – to cue a particular experience – because people never look at them again. Two factors may prevent people from using these memory pointers as intended. First, the sheer number of accumulated photos may be too large to be effective. Memory pointers may need to be curated in order to be useful; for example, in the form of a more selective photo album, a collage, or a display in the case of objects. However, most

people do not spend time on such curations, as the task of selecting and editing often seems daunting and overwhelming in the present, so people keep delaying it, even though they intend to do it eventually. Companies such as Google and Facebook have made significant investments in technologies that automatically curate photos for their users (for example, by date, people present or location), promoting these curations particularly at the end of the year, when people naturally look back at their experiences. However, Google and Facebook operate on different knowledge bases from each other. While Google Photos typically has access to the entire universe of photos taken by an individual, Facebook only has access to what users decided to share. In our research, we have found that albums created for the self include very different types of photos than albums created to share with others. An album based on what Facebook knows may provide a more positive and attractive summary (for example, flattering, posed, smiling depictions), possibly even communicating a more aspirational identity. An album based on what Google knows, on the other hand, may be more comprehensive (for example, including candid, quirky or private moments) and may seem more authentic and reflective of one's true identity. But as technology improves, especially image analysis and artificial intelligence, these curations could dramatically improve to better match their effectiveness as memory pointers.

As a whole, this chapter highlights the importance of memory pointers as people strive to verify their identities to themselves and others. To understand this process, we have examined the acquisition and usage of these memory pointers as they occur over time. We believe that many important questions remain to be explored. As people invest significant resources in the creation and acquisition of memory pointers, a deeper understanding of when, why, and in what manner these memory pointers help people to recall their experiences is important for researchers interested in identity, as well as for all of us interested in better using memory pointers.

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15. Identity, personal continuity and psychological connectedness across time and over transformation

Oleg Urminsky and Daniel Bartels

A person's sense of their own identity (that is, the person's self-concept) plays a central role in how the person thinks and acts. Research on identity, particularly in social psychology and consumer behavior, often views a person's self-concept as a set of multiple (social) identities, sometimes characterized in terms of the category labels that the person believes apply to themselves, like "male" or "high school athlete" (Markus and Wurf 1987). These multiple categories provide a basis for defining oneself, often in terms of the features that are inherited from membership in these categories.

Research based on this perspective had largely focused on the role of multiple identities at a given time in a given situation. However, the relevance of identities with differing associations may shift over time, and people may then react to or manage conflicts between identities they subscribe to or conflicts between how they see themselves and the person they would like to be (Reed and Forehand 2016; Urminsky et al. 2014). Philosophers distinguish between theories of synchronic identity (the identity that something has at a point in time) and theories of diachronic identity (whether something at a later time, like a future person, is identical to something existing at an earlier time).

We survey multiple perspectives on how people think about their diachronic identity, over time and across periods of identity-relevant change. We focus on how people think about their own "personal continuity" over time – how much they view their future self to be substantially the same person they are now – and some implications for consumer decisions. This topic is related to the verification principle (Reed et al. 2012) – the tendency for people to willfully change in the direction of an identity that they hope to fulfill – but also extends to beliefs about undesired, or even disruptive, future change.

THEORIES OF IDENTITY OVER TIME

What does it mean to say that a person is substantially different now than they used to be, or to say that one's identity has changed, or is expected

to change, over time? One starting point is a philosophical literature that debates normative rationales for caring about one's future self. Whether an entity at two points in time is the same – whether it persists or ceases to exist – is a question of “numerical identity” (e.g., Starmans and Bloom 2018), and different criteria (for example, physical, biological, social, psychological, causal or informational relationships) can give rise to radically different definitions of numerical identity (Shoemaker and Tobia forthcoming; Martin and Barresi 2003).

Regarding the descriptive question of how lay people think about identity over time, we think that most people do not typically consider only numerical identity. For example, consider how a person thinks of an elderly relative who has lost substantial cognitive functioning but still retains some of their unique characteristics (for example, personality or memories), at least some of the time. The person may simultaneously say, “I lost my grandmother a long time ago,” “I visited my grandmother today” and “She was more like my grandmother today,” without feeling as though they are being inconsistent. Likewise, a person may say of their future self, “That would no longer be me,” when thinking about different kinds of anticipated changes.

It may be useful to think about identity as a subjective psychological construct, studied as it occurs in people's judgments. Starmans and Bloom (2018) distinguish numerical identity from what they term “qualitative identity,” which they characterize as the similarity (defined as the degree of feature overlap) between the self at two points in time. However, feature overlap fails to explain even simpler similarity judgments (Medin et al. 1993), and so is probably inadequate to characterize people's more nuanced views of their own identity over time. In fact, recent research has found that feature overlap is not always the best predictor of people's judgments of the continuity of people (De Freitas et al. 2018; Chen et al. 2016).

We propose that understanding how people think about change over time and their future selves involves a third way of thinking about identity, distinct from numerical or qualitative identity, which we will refer to as “personal continuity.” Personal continuity is neither an all-or-nothing numerical identity judgment about persistence, nor a simple accounting of subjective similarity between a person at two points in time. Instead, beliefs about personal continuity involve continuous judgments about how much the characteristics that define a person persist over time. In this context, beliefs about self-continuity are subjective judgments about how much of what currently defines one's own self will persist over time in the future self.

THE BASIS OF PERSONAL CONTINUITY AND SELF-CONTINUITY

A descriptive theory of how people think about the continuity of themselves and others should allow for some changes to not be seen as disruptive to continuity. After all, an 80-year-old and the ten-year-old she once was, differ in many physical, biological, social and psychological features, but they may think of their past and future selves as the same person throughout their life. Conversely, people often think of their future selves as distinct and not fully the same as the current self, even over time periods that lack drastic changes in physical, biological, social, psychological and informational features. This is what distinguishes personal continuity from similarity-based qualitative identity.

The category membership view of identity is often characterized in terms of “multiple identities” (see, e.g., Markus and Wurf 1987), such that a person’s identity is jointly defined by those categories that the person sees as applying to the self and that provide descriptive content about people in that category. The descriptive content specifies “what that ‘kind’ of person looks like, thinks, feels, and does,” and may contain both descriptive norms and injunctive norms: ideas about how these kinds of people typically act or should act (Reed et al. 2012, p.312). For example, Paul, a male high school athlete who lives in an odd-numbered house would see being male and being an athlete as parts of his identity, and would therefore be influenced by the descriptive content he sees as contained in the categories “male” and “athlete.” However, Paul is unlikely to see “odd-numbered house resident” as an aspect of his identity, because that category lacks descriptive content. Likewise, he is unlikely to see “college student” as an aspect of his identity, because that category does not yet apply to him.

We can think of judgments of a person’s continuity across time and over transformations as a function of the continuity of the multiple identity categories. A past change (or future anticipated change) to one or more underlying identity categories (that is, a loss of category membership) would therefore change people’s identity (Akerlof and Kranton 2010; Hogg et al. 1995) and disrupt their sense of self-continuity, if they see the categories as applying to themselves and having descriptive content. As a result, a change for one person (leaving high school) may be experienced as disrupting self-continuity, but not for another person, who did not see the category (being a high school student) as containing descriptive content or who did not see the category as applying to themselves (for example, saw themselves as a student rather than a high school student).

A different set of views defines personal continuity as the preservation of specific types of features of a person. However, there is considerable

disagreement about specifically which psychological aspects of the person matter most. One line of thought, stretching back to Locke's views of awareness of past actions as necessary for remaining accountable for those actions (see Shoemaker and Tobia forthcoming) treats memories as especially important for personal continuity. If people are defined by what they remember, loss of memories (for example, as in Alzheimer's patients) would represent a loss of personal continuity. Consistent with this view, people often judge greater personal continuity over changes when autobiographical memories are preserved (Blok et al. 2005; Nichols and Bruno 2010).

However, changes over time in other psychological aspects also seem potentially relevant for assessing personal continuity. Past or anticipated changes in one's personality traits and preferences may be seen as relevant to personal continuity (Haslam et al. 2004; Gelman et al. 2007). Recent research has identified moral characteristics as the strongest factor in judgments of other people's continuity (Heiphetz et al. 2017; Strohminger and Nichols 2014, 2015). For example, Strohminger and Nichols (2015) document that relatives see a greater loss of personal continuity in a loved one who is suffering from forms of dementia associated with changes in moral behaviors, more so than forms of dementia associated with other cognitive losses (for example, memories). Such judgments are personal and subjective, and depend on one's own personal moral beliefs characteristics (De Freitas et al. 2018; Newman and Knobe 2019).

For judgments of one's own self-continuity, it is less clear that any one psychological aspect of identity matters most. Chen et al. (2016) measured how disruptive to self-continuity people perceived different kinds of changes to be. Although changes differed in their disruption, no specific category of change emerged as consistently more disruptive. Instead, changes in "causally central" aspects (those seen as causally related to more other aspects) were seen as more disruptive to self-continuity than changes to "causally peripheral" aspects (see Chen, Chapter 20 in this volume, for a more detailed discussion). This distinction is conceptually related to, and may help to explain, the notion that some aspects of identity are subjectively more important to a given person than others (Markus and Wurf 1987; Reed 2004; Reed et al. 2012).

What these diverse views have in common is the notion that self-continuity represents a middle ground between numerical identity and qualitative (similarity-overlap) identity (Chen and Urminsky 2019b). In this view, people have ideas about what defines their own self-continuity and the personal continuity of others, and correspondingly, what changes would disrupt that continuity. While a change in a moral value may be the most disruptive to self-continuity for one person, a change in life goals or

memories may be most disruptive for another person. Thus, if Paul the high-school athlete sees himself as defined by being an athlete, graduating high school will not disrupt his perceived self-continuity as long as he remains an athlete. However, for a teammate who defines himself primarily as a high-school student, dropping athletics will not disrupt his self-continuity as much as graduating high school does.

This approach to identity may seem circular: what disrupts a person's sense of their continuity is changes in whatever that person thinks defines themselves, and what people think defines them is whatever they think must remain unchanged for their identity to persist. However, this bi-directional relationship follows from the assumption that when people think of change as transforming them into another person – when they say things like “I wouldn't be me any more” – they are not (usually) referring to numerical identity, but are, instead, expressing that they would not expect such a large change in that given feature, and that the resulting future person would be different enough to not count as fully (qualitatively) “myself.”

This approach to self-continuity draws on the philosopher Derek Parfit's notion of “connectedness to the future self” as the number and strength of psychological connections (having to do with the preservation of your personality, temperament, major likes and dislikes, beliefs, values, ambitions, life goals and ideals) held between their present and future self (Parfit 1984, pp.204–209). He maintains that reducing these connections can warrant a reduction in concern for one's future self (Parfit 1971). In this view, the less psychological overlap there is between the present and future selves, the more a person should normatively favor the interests of the current self over those of the future self.

Although Parfit's normative arguments are controversial (Dancy 1997), his approach is useful for descriptive questions about people's assessments of self-continuity. Parfit's notion of connectedness to the future self does not assume that the future self must be seen as another person (that is, as lacking numerical identity). Instead, the future self is a partially overlapping continuation of the current self, which may be perceived as almost identical to the current self, or as quite different, or somewhere in-between. Importantly, Parfit's notion leaves open which psychological aspects provide the basis for psychological connections for a given person.

We suggest that a person's general sense of self-continuity over time depends on subjective perceptions of psychological connections over time that may differ across people. We would further distinguish between “connectedness” and “continuity.” Parfit (and other philosophers) contend that connectedness is about the preservation of important psychological features. People's conceptions of continuity of identity are more nuanced

than just the constancy or change in those features, and may persist despite change.

Specifically, changes that are congruent with people's theories of how their features are causally related to each other (Chen et al. 2016) or how they will develop over time (Molouki and Bartels 2017) do not undermine people's perceptions of self-continuity. If people think that a given feature should be invariant over time, changes to that feature would reduce both psychological connectedness and continuity with the future self. However, in other situations (for example, when change is expected) the change would still impact connectedness (as defined in the prior literature), but would not necessarily affect judgments of self-continuity.

Since judging self-continuity presumes active consideration of the present and future selves, the degree of continuity is empirically and conceptually distinct from the vividness of the future self, consideration of future consequences or active planning for the future (Frederick et al. 2009; Spiller 2011). While self-continuity is also conceptually distinct from the valence of potential changes, valence is often relevant to how people assess self-continuity, as we discuss next.

SELF-CONTINUITY AND VALENCE OF CHANGE

People's beliefs about what makes them who they are now and who they want to be in the future can influence their behavior. The identity verification principle holds that people use feedback from the environment to determine how well they are living up to their desired identity (Reed et al. 2012). People's perceptions of their abilities affect their goals and how they strive toward those goals (Markus and Nurius 1986; Markus and Wurf 1987), which can affect preferences and consumption (LeBoeuf et al. 2010; Reed 2004; Reed et al. 2012). Thus, failure to progress towards a desired identity can undermine perceptions of one's own identity, contrary to theories of qualitative identity that are based on simple feature overlap.

Consistent with the identity verification view, positive changes reflect common aspirations for self-improvement (Kanten and Teigen 2008). In fact, negative changes are seen as more disruptive to perceptions of others' personal continuity than are positive changes (Newman et al. 2014; Newman et al. 2015; Tobia 2015). For example, people judge that a person who changes from being very cruel to being very kind has revealed her "true self": that these positive qualities were lurking within and that the person has undergone some sort of maturational unfolding (Newman et al. 2014; Tobia 2015) to reveal who they really are.

However, people also generally expect improvement over time in them-

selves and others (Busseri et al. 2009; Haslam et al. 2007; Wilson and Ross 2001), often neglecting the possibility of specifically negative changes in themselves in the future (Molouki et al. 2016). This suggests that the reason why improvements do not undermine perceived continuity may be that improvements are consistent with people's general beliefs about human development (Shoemaker and Tobia forthcoming).

Recent work has evaluated how differences across people in their specific expectations about individual trajectories of change shape perceived continuity. Molouki and Bartels (2017) orthogonally manipulated the valence of change and expectations of change (in some studies) and valence of change and desire for change (in others) and examined which changes undermined the sense of self-continuity. While improvements were generally assessed as less disruptive to self-continuity than were declines, it was specifically the changes that were congruent with people's expectations and desires that led to less perceived disruption of self-continuity. These patterns suggest that continuity of the self-concept is about both the person who you desire to become (consistent with the identity verification principle) and the person you expect to become.

SELF-CONTINUITY AND CONCERN FOR THE FUTURE SELF

Static, synchronic, identity influences choices either by providing a template for behavior or by motivations arising from the desire to manage and reconcile diverse aspects of the self (Reed et al. 2012). The dynamic nature of a potentially changing identity over time can interact with decision-making in distinct ways, particularly in decisions presenting trade-offs between the present and future.

Parfit proposed that when anticipated connectedness to the future self is low (that is, when people perceive the future self as very different from the present self), people should rationally care less about the welfare of their future self. Beyond the merits of this normative claim, Parfit's theory raises an empirical question as to whether anticipated self-continuity shapes people's degree of concern for their own future self, affecting how much they are willing to sacrifice resources in the present for greater benefits to be enjoyed by the future self (Frederick et al. 2002; Frederick 2006).

Recent research has tested whether having higher anticipated self-continuity (operationalized as the perceived connectedness between the current self and the future self at a specific point in time) results in more far-sighted choices. Bartels and Urminsky (2011) had graduating college seniors read about postgraduation life changes, either as having a major

effect on identity (“low connectedness”) or as not impacting people’s fixed and stable identity (“high connectedness”). Participants then made a series of real lottery choices between winning a \$120 gift certificate in one week (when the drawing would be held) and winning gift certificates ranging from \$120 to \$240 to be received in a year. Participants in the low connectedness condition (for whom impending graduation was described in terms of a loss of self-continuity) were more likely to choose the more immediate lottery rewards, compared to participants in the high connectedness condition (who had read that about self-continuity postgraduation).

The relationship between more anticipated self-continuity (manipulated or measured) and more far-sighted intertemporal choices has been found in other studies, using both hypothetical and incentive-compatible trade-offs, and controlling for potential confounds (Bartels et al. 2013; Bartels and Urminsky 2011, 2015; Ersner-Hershfield et al. 2009a; but not in Frederick 2003). These results suggest that anticipating changes in the traits that define one’s own self-concept (and therefore anticipating low self-continuity) yields less motivation to provide resources for one’s own future self than when people anticipate higher self-continuity.

Differences in self-continuity over time may also help to explain a central puzzle in people’s time discounting preferences: the inconsistency of discount rates. People often make seemingly inconsistent choices when trading off the present and future, versus when making the same trade-offs between compensation and delay involving two future outcomes. For example, people are more likely to choose a present over a future outcome (\$120 now over \$180 in six months), than when choosing between the same two outcomes with the same delay in the future (\$120 in six months versus \$180 in one year) (Green et al. 1994).

These seemingly inconsistent preferences (see Urminsky and Zauberman 2016 for a review) may be partially explained by differences in people’s perceived connectedness to their future self over different time intervals. The non-linear pattern of hyperbolic temporal discounting tracks closely with a non-linear pattern of reduction in connectedness over time, with greater decreases in connectedness between the present and future than between two equivalent future times (Bartels and Rips 2010). Thus, the seeming “present-biased” inconsistency in people’s immediate versus delayed intertemporal trade-offs may be partially attributable to judgments of connectedness between the present and future self typically being lower than between two future selves separated by the same delay.

Perceiving a high degree of connectedness with the future self can also affect decisions that involve the welfare of others. High connectedness has been associated with people foregoing immediately rewarding alternatives that are ethically risky in the long term (Hershfield et al. 2012). Conversely,

reduced connectedness to the future self (which can reduce generosity to that future self) can increase generosity to relevant others by reducing the countervailing influence of self-interest. For example, Bartels et al. (2013) find that the difference in perceived connectedness to their future self versus to other people in the present predicted how they divided an uneven sum of money between the future self and the other person.

This allocation paradigm is borrowed from the literature on “social discounting” (Rachlin and Jones 2008), which finds that people’s generosity to others declines as social distance increases. Temporal discounting and social discounting both seem to follow a hyperboloid function and both emerge in children around four years of age (Garon et al. 2011). These parallels have led some behavioral scientists to postulate that people treat the future self as if it lies on a continuum between the present self and other people. Consistent with this view, studies have found correspondences in neural activation when thinking of the future self and other people, which correlate with discounting (Ersner-Hershfield et al. 2009b; Mitchell et al. 2011).

However, it is important not to take this “future self as a different person” analogy too literally. People’s own degree of anticipated personal continuity is likely to be obvious and important enough to them (particularly when making explicit intertemporal trade-offs) that they will not need to recruit social cognition reasoning. Even after major life changes, people are likely to share more and stronger connections with their own future selves than they will ever share with most other people.

Molouki and Bartels (2019) set out to test whether people treat future selves like they treat others, by measuring the distinct influence of four relevant factors (need, deservingness, liking and similarity) on monetary allocation decisions that were both interpersonal (current self versus others) and intrapersonal (current versus future self). People did treat the future self like they treat other people, in that the relative influence of these factors is similar for both types of targets. However, there was also a very large difference in degree: monetary allocations to the future self were consistently higher than allocations to others. Although allocations to the future self and to others are evaluated using similar criteria, important differences in scope remain that are not captured by the analogy between social discounting and intertemporal discounting.

WHAT KINDS OF DECISIONS ARE INFLUENCED BY SELF-CONTINUITY?

The results discussed thus far are suggestive that anticipated self-continuity contributes to the motivation to provide for the future self. However,

people's allocation between present and future self (for example, time discounting) is largely of interest as a proxy for choices and behaviors in which short-term benefits compete with long-term benefits more generally. In this view, making seemingly short-sighted choices can be thought of as impatiently favoring a smaller-sooner reward over a larger-but-later benefit (Ainslie 1975). Supporting this view, people who are impatient in time discounting tasks do, on average, show more evidence of various short-sighted behaviors and the resulting outcomes, particularly in their finances, but also related to physical health (reviewed in Urminsky and Zauberman 2016; see Pezzuto and Urminsky 2018 for a large-scale integrative replication).

This suggests that anticipated self-continuity may help to explain other decisions and behaviors that pit present interests against future benefits. Consistent with this proposition, people who reported higher anticipated self-continuity chose lower levels of spending when opportunity costs were salient (Bartels and Urminsky 2015), were more likely to keep money for themselves by donating less to charity (Bartels et al. 2013), and reported more accumulated savings (Ersner-Hershfield et al. 2009a; Joshi and Fast 2013).

Evidence that anticipated self-continuity and seeming far-sightedness are related have been found in other domains as well. People who anticipate more future self-continuity may procrastinate less on their academic work (Blouin-Hudon and Pychyl 2015) and earn higher grades (Adelman et al. 2017). Perceptions of greater continuity also are correlated with healthy behaviors (for example, exercising; Rutchick et al. 2018). In ethical domains, greater perceived self-continuity relates to greater acceptance of punishment for past unethical behavior (Mott 2018; Tierney et al. 2014), more ethical choices in the present, and a greater likelihood of keeping future commitments (Hershfield et al. 2012).

These results point to the potential for a wide-ranging influence of anticipated self-continuity on decision-making. However, relatively little research has been done to identify reliable moderators and boundary conditions. One exception is whether people identify the long-term trade-offs in their decisions. In the context of consumer spending decisions, Bartels and Urminsky (2015) find that consideration of future consequences (for example, considering the opportunity cost of current spending) is unrelated to anticipated self-continuity, but may be a necessary condition for connectedness to the future self to influence decisions.

In one such study, participants chose between cheaper and more expensive products in multiple product categories. When trade-offs were cued (by having participants first evaluate the relative importance of product categories before making their choices), experimentally bolstering

self-continuity (via connectedness to the future self) promoted consumer savings, reducing choices of expensive versions in the less desirable product categories. However, when trade-offs were not cued before choices, there was no effect of manipulating self-continuity on purchase preferences. Bolstering connectedness can indeed reduce spending, but perhaps only for less desirable purchase categories and only when people actively consider the trade-offs involved. These findings highlight the need for more research that tests generalizability and identifies when it is that self-continuity does or does not motivate far-sighted decisions.

OPEN QUESTIONS ABOUT SELF-CONTINUITY

How is people's subjective sense of identity continuity formed, and how do differences across individuals in perceptions of self-continuity arise? Bartels and Rips (2010) identify specific future events related to important aspects of identity (for example, a religious conversion), for which anticipating change can reduce perceived self-continuity. Recent research on what makes experiences transformative (Paul 2014) and on the causal structure of identity (Chen et al. 2016) may point to useful approaches to more generally answering this question. However, measurement over longer periods of time or spanning transformative life experiences, which can capture lasting changes to identity as they occur, may be most informative.

Does identity continuity guide behavior even in the absence of intertemporal trade-offs? If people seek to achieve (per the verification principle) and maintain desired identities, people may be motivated to behave in accordance with the norms of these identities in order to preserve self-continuity. Consistent with this view, Chen and Urminsky (2019a) find that holders of a political party or national identity for whom that identity is more central (that is, is implicated in more causal relationships with other aspects of the self) are more likely to vote for their party's candidate (despite their own misgivings about the candidate) or to support a nationalist policy (Brexit).

Conversely, there may be circumstances in which self-continuity has negative associations or is undesired, motivating people to behave in ways that either disrupt self-continuity, or at least signal a change in prominent aspects of the self-concept. For example, a person who has defined themselves by undesired self-destructive behaviors (for example, as a substance abuser), or by identities closely associated with those behaviors (for example, as a musician who plays in clubs where drug and alcohol use are rampant), may see a disruption to continuity as a welcome "clean break"

that would facilitate positive change. Yang and Urminsky (2015) find a lower likelihood of behaviors symbolically signaling self-continuity when people's past outcomes lead to predicting future negative outcomes. Such "fresh start" behaviors tend to be clustered at times that signal the potential for change in identity (Dai et al. 2014, 2015). The possibility that people are more open to engaging in behaviors associated with discontinuity when change is desirable needs more research.

While people may characterize themselves as a single entity, psychological approaches that have attempted to build theories of singular identity seem to fall short in explaining people's intuitions and self-concept-related behaviors. Instead, research on the self-concept suggests a broader view, where what defines a person is multifaceted and in flux. Understanding how people anticipate changes in the self-concept, which changes they desire, and their resulting sense of self-continuity or disruption, can yield key insights into people's sense of what makes them who they are and the decisions that they make.

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16. How technology shapes identity-based consumer behavior

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Technology is advancing at lightning speed in crucial domains such as robotics, artificial intelligence and information technology. We use technological devices not only to talk to other people, but also as actual interlocutors. We can increasingly delegate complex tasks such as driving or filing tax returns to machines and algorithms. We can communicate with other people in almost any corner of the planet seamlessly and at virtually no marginal cost. Technological buzzwords are everywhere, and technological companies dominate stock markets. We are still figuring out how to make the most of the “Internet of People” and we already wonder what to make of the “Internet of Things” (Ashton 2009). Still, we often manage to take amazing machines for granted. The smartphone is only just over ten years old but for most people it is difficult to think of life without it. In this fast-changing environment, new habits can rapidly become entrenched and decades-old habits can equally rapidly be discarded.

This high-tech world offers both opportunities and challenges to consumer researchers. On the one hand, technology is opening many new research questions about identity-based consumer behavior that offer fertile ground for new insight, with great potential for both substantive and theoretical contributions. On the other hand, technological changes urge researchers to re-evaluate long-standing assumptions about consumer behavior and to develop revised models of marketplace relations, between firms and consumers, and between consumers themselves. This chapter focuses on the interplay between technology and identity. Consistent with previous definitions, we conceive identity as any category label to which a consumer self-associates (Reed et al. 2012). From an identity standpoint, an especially relevant issue is whether and how technology enables a new repertoire of identity-relevant behaviors and the role of these behaviors in the experience of “being a particular type of person.” In this chapter we focus on issues of self-verification, and thus explore the effects of technology on how “feedback from the external environment will be introspectively processed to determine progress toward the ideal representation of an identity” (Reed et al. 2012).

Improvements in technology lead to an increase in the nature and range of tasks that an individual can perform with a given amount of time and energy, and is thus a crucial indicator of societal progress. Understanding how technology affects the way consumers relate to the marketplace should thus be a central goal of research on consumer behavior in general, and of identity-based consumer behavior in particular. In this chapter, we examine how technology impacts identity-based consumer behavior. We organize our review in five sections, each discussing a technological trend and its relationship to self-verification. Within each section, we discuss how technology helps and hinders identity-based consumer behavior – that is, consumption that is driven by the desire to be consistent with an identity that consumers self-associate with (Reed et al. 2012) – devoting special attention to recent developments in the literature. Then, we highlight open questions with the hope to encourage additional work in this area. Table 16.1 offers a summary of the major take-aways of this chapter.

INTERNET

The Internet has a profound influence on our self-construction. It has brought people, ideas, products and cultures into our lives that we would never otherwise have met or heard of. It offers richer options for consumers to hold on to their existing identities and for positive self-verification. To exemplify this benefit of the Internet, Reed et al. (2012) give the example of a runner who cannot practice because of injury. Although unable to perform the most crucial behavior to validate their identity as runner (that is, running), this person “can nevertheless interact with other runners online and belong to a community by posting messages and being active on websites. This social contact can help individuals reaffirm, and hence verify, their identity” (ibid., p.317). This example highlights the role of the Internet as a key enabler of identity-relevant behaviors and, hence, of self-verification. However, it is an open question how conflicting identity signals received in the virtual and in the real world affect the development of one’s identity. These signals might operate independently, and combine in an additive manner (a positive Internet effect on self-verification). But the discomfort of being unable to perform identity-relevant behaviors might be exacerbated by virtual exposure to these behaviors, suggesting that in certain circumstances the Internet might have negative consequences for self-verification.

A key way in which the Internet allows self-verification is by facilitating social interactions. The Internet breaks down barriers to communication and allows finding and reaching individuals with relevant interests and

Table 16.1 How technological trends affect identity-based consumer behavior

Technological trends	Enabler of identity-based consumption	Disabler of identity-based consumption	Future research questions
Internet	Expands the options that consumers have for holding on to their identities and for positive self-verification	Confirms consumers' viewpoints and identity and in turn restricts their construction of self	- How do consumers self-verify when they use online platforms such as Etsy or eBay? - Do search engines affect identity-formation? - How do social media echo chambers shape identity?
Dematerialization	Facilitates the sharing of information and enthusiasm, thus helping consumers to revise and construct their identities	Reduces the potential for consumers to self-verify due to the lack of materiality	- How can the attractiveness of immaterial products to identity-driven consumers be increased? - Does exposure to digital products increase the likelihood of these products being incorporated into the extended self?
Automation	Frees consumers from skill-requiring tasks and creates new and more nuanced identities	Takes away the potential for consumers to attribute outcomes to their skills and consequently hinders self-verification	- Does the identity-relevance of a particular behavior change as a function of automation? - How does the presence of automation affect the definition of identity?
Artificial intelligence	Enables personalized ads and recommendation to consumers, facilitating identity-based consumption	Undermines people's sense of personal and human identity when algorithm takes over decisions and agency	- Do personalized recommendations enabled by algorithms facilitate identity-based consumption? - Does artificial intelligence obstruct people's construction of self-concept?
Human enhancement	Helps consumers to release their potentials and become who they want to be	Makes consumers view themselves as less authentic and threatens established self-conception	- Do enhancement technologies obscure or reveal one's true self? - Are people still themselves if they use enhancement technologies to alter appearance, increase performance, change motivation or even personalities?

similar beliefs. From the standpoint of identity research, an especially interesting consequence is that fringe identities are becoming easier to express and experience because of the availability of forums for discussion and online vehicles for self-expression (Bargh and McKenna 2004). People with uncommon interests can often find it difficult to socialize with other individuals who hold a particular identity (for example, Korean supporters of a Dutch soccer team), because of the absence of individuals with such interests in their immediate social environment. To these individuals, the Internet offers easy opportunities for interactions with like-minded others, and the associated opportunity to self-express and self-verify.

Internet forums and platforms can also offer social recognition and validation of one's abilities. For example, a Lego fan can post their creations online and be recognized as a skillful creator by community members. Future research should investigate the self-validation offered by online platforms such as Etsy or eBay, where hobbyists and fans can promote and sell their own creations. Finally, Reed et al. (2012) point out that modern information technology makes it much simpler to keep connections alive with a particular culture. This makes it easier for immigrants to experience their heritage culture, for example by reading content in the heritage language or by following news from far-away places, with consequences for cultural identification (Lenoir et al. 2013).

A separate but related development, the Internet of Things, both provides novel opportunities for self-verification and compounds those for self-expression that are offered by social networks. Personal health-tracking devices, for example, allow measuring and accessing several physical activities, providing quantifiable feedback about activities that may be central to people's identity. Further, due to their seamless integration with the Internet, more and more products allow consumers to use them and reach out to other users at the same time, ultimately acting as media for self-expression. FitBit, for example, allows people to efficiently record, summarize and access their running sessions (self-verification) and to publish such running statistics on social media (self-expression). On the other hand, studies have demonstrated that personal quantification might reduce people's enjoyment of the core activities (Etkin 2016), suggesting that the process of self-verification through such products might come with a cost.

In addition to providing a vehicle for self-verification and self-expression, the Internet anonymity also provides a safe space to anonymously experiment with different identities. This can be especially important in the case of stigmatized identities (McKenna and Bargh 1998). For example, individuals who are unsure about their sexual orientation can find the opportunity online to "try out" different identities. This process of

experimentation with the self is often difficult and socially risky in the “real world” and the Internet offers opportunities for self-verification that are otherwise difficult to come by. A darker ramification of these developments is that societally harmful identities, such as neo-Nazi, can become more appealing and “viable” thanks to the virtual communities that enabled by the Internet.

Beyond the context of social interaction and media consumption, the Internet is radically changing distribution channels. For most consumers, this has led to a great increase in the range of products that they can access. Online retailers such as Amazon offer virtually unlimited product assortments able to satisfy a very wide variety of consumption goals. For example, a *Star Wars* fan in a remote village can easily buy cosplay equipment such as light sabers to develop and self-verify their identity. One of the most popular ideas accompanying the growth of online distribution channels is the “long tail” (Anderson 2006). Accordingly, online retailers allow a market to emerge for even the most niche products, leading to more fragmentation and a loss of power for traditional media companies. Self-verification of one’s identity through products and consumption is typically made vastly easier by the greater market access afforded by the Internet.

On the other hand, the Internet can also restrain the processes of construction of our self. For instance, when we use search engines to look for particular information, we tend to come up with search terms that verify our views and, potentially, our identity. As a result, search engines return results that are likely biased towards the view that the search terms suggested (Leung and Urminsky 2019). The search results displayed by the search engines might in turn artificially reinforce existing self-views. These skewed results might reinforce people’s existing beliefs and self-conception. This notion is parallel to the idea of the “echo chamber”: a metaphor in which beliefs are amplified or reinforced by repetition inside a closed system (Jamieson and Cappella 2008). When people visit an echo chamber, such as a social media feed populated with ideas consistent with their own, they avoid entertaining alternative views and can more easily fall victim to confirmation bias. This might distort, rather than facilitate, the verification of one’s self, and can ultimately lead to political and social polarization (Barberá et al. 2015).

Personalized searches (tailored to an individual’s interests) exacerbate this problem. Algorithms selectively estimate what information or advertisement a user would prefer to see based on location, past click-behavior and search history (Bozdag 2013). Subsequently, users become separated from information that disagrees with their viewpoints, effectively isolating them in their own ideological bubbles, and restricting their construction of

self (Pariser 2011). Future research should investigate the role of search engines in identity formation.

DEMATERIALIZATION

Another technological trend that shapes people's ability to self-verify through consumption is dematerialization. Many product categories in recent years have been disrupted by the advent of digital and immaterial substitutes. Only a few years ago, consumers had to buy physical books or DVDs in brick-and-mortar stores. However, these products are dematerializing: they are now mostly invisible and intangible. This trend has been especially important in the case of media products, including videogames, books, music and movies. In these categories, consumers can access the desired media content without the need for a physical support. Instead, they can play games online, stream music and movies, and download books. A number of recent articles have highlighted the importance of dematerialization for feelings of ownership and identity-based consumer behavior. Atasoy and Morewedge (2018) demonstrate that consumers are willing to pay more to purchase physical products than equivalent digital products. In particular, physical products are found to elicit higher association with the self than digital products, thus establishing stronger psychological ownership among consumers. This research echoes earlier contributions on how touching, or even imagining touching, products increases consumers' perceived ownership and, in turn, the valuation of such products (Peck and Shu 2009).

Importantly, consumers not only exhibit weaker psychological ownership over digital products, but they also often gain a lower enhanced sense of self from digital possessions (Belk 2013). For instance, many consumers prefer physical records of music because digital music files cannot be easily displayed (Brown and Sellen 2006). In addition, digital possessions lack the sensory characteristics to make them embedded in our sense of self (Petrelli and Whittaker 2010). Leung et al. (2019) have explored how dematerialization impacts self-verification. Dematerialization brings many consumption benefits. For example, with an e-book, consumers can easily resize the font or search within the text. However, these authors show that consumers prefer material goods over their immaterial counterparts when they want to verify their sense of self. Material products may have higher self-verifying ability because, compared to their immaterial counterparts, they establish a stronger and more physical link with those who they represent. According to Peirce's classic semiotics framework, these products are not only symbols but also indices (that is, signs with a physical, real

connection with what they represent) and thus, they better represent and verify their owner's identity. Therefore, when consumers want to verify their identity, they would prefer material products. Future research should examine how to increase the attractiveness of immaterial products to identity-driven consumers.

Note that the effect of dematerialization on products' conduciveness to self-verification might differ across people. For instance, more exposure to digital possessions might increase the likelihood that for certain consumers (for example, young adults), immaterial products feel as real as material products (Lehdonvirta 2013), a possibility that future research should investigate. In some cases, dematerialization could even facilitate identity-based consumption. For instance, in the past, people who wanted to share their favorite music with others needed to share physical copies of the music (for example, audiocassettes). Now, thanks to dematerialization they can easily share their favorite albums with a much broader community, along with videos, information about artists, and lyrics (Born 2011). Thus, dematerialization can facilitate the sharing of information and provide a powerful vehicle for self-expression. Though this is only a conjecture, it suggests that the precise ways in which dematerialization affects consumers' ability to self-verify may depend on the strategies used for self-verification (for example, sensory engagement, sharing with others).

AUTOMATION

Automated products, such as food processors and Global Positioning System (GPS)-equipped devices, perform tasks that would normally require people's skills and effort, allowing consumers to accomplish more in less time. Whereas anglers in the old days relied on their experience to locate fish, now with a click on a portable device they can know what type of fish is in the area and at what distance from their boat. Across domains such as food, commuting and entertainment, products are increasingly integrating automated features that improve their efficiency, resulting in more convenient experiences. However, Leung et al. (2018) found that consumers react more negatively to automated products in presence of identity motives. For example, they found that consumers who strongly identify as car drivers are more likely to own a car with manual transmission (the effect is independent from those of expertise and of beliefs of the quality of automatic transmission). This occurs because consumers also choose and enjoy products for non-utilitarian reasons (Loewenstein 1999). For instance, consumers often use products to signal their identities to themselves and to others (Berger and Heath 2007), which in skill- or

effort-related consumption situations often requires active involvement. By performing a task that would otherwise be performed by the consumer, automated products decrease the extent to which consumers can attribute to themselves the outcome of consumption, with potentially detrimental effects on self-verification. As a result, automated products are less attractive to consumers with strong identity investments in the consumption domain. The results are robust even when the automated products do not prevent users from developing their skills.

However, even consumers with strong identification in a given consumption domain do not always resist automation. First, identifiers may be less likely to resist automation when is perceived as allowing them to use their skills (Leung et al. 2018). Identifying as bakers led to resisting a bread-baking machine but not a dough-mixer, reflecting the different levels of skills replaced by the two products. Accordingly, the framing of automated products matters: in another study, participants saw an advertisement for kitchen equipment, and were asked to evaluate its attractiveness. The automated product was either framed as skill-replacing (that is, performing actions the user would otherwise perform) or skill-allowing (that is, allowing users to put their skills to use). Strong identification in cooking corresponded to lower liking of the product when the product was framed as skill-replacing, an effect that disappeared when the product was framed as skill-allowing.

Future research should further explore the relationship between automation and identity, which need not be unidirectional. Whereas identity motives negatively affect the desire to automate identity-relevant tasks, what is relevant for identity may be malleable and may itself be a function of automation. When a task can be automated, it might be perceived as less defining of an identity. Social identities are not immanent, but may change over time (Urminsky et al. 2014) and with technological progress (Castells 2011; France 2007). For example, being a photographer is different today than it was 50 years ago, with certain skills becoming less crucial to possess (for example, focusing the camera lens) because of widely available automation (for example, auto-focus). In this case, automation might have contributed to give a different meaning to being a photographer, and possibly to create a larger number of more nuanced identities, each requiring different skills. For instance, even though the ability to focus the lens manually is still important for portrait photographers, auto-focus has made photography possible when shooting active wildlife, thus creating a new “outdoor photographer” identity. The dynamics between automation and social identity are understudied, and more research is needed to describe how marketplace forces affects the evolution of consumer identities.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Until very recently, artificial intelligence (AI) seemed an unfathomable technology of the distant future. However, we need not look so far, as the influence of AI in daily life is more pervasive than the extremeness of the examples from science fiction might suggest. More prosaically, and similar in spirit to automation, AI enables computers to perform tasks that would traditionally require human intelligence, from personalized products recommendation to language translation. As discussed using examples below, these developments simultaneously aid and obstruct self-verification.

On the one hand, developments in AI allow consumers to find marketplace opportunities for self-verification that may otherwise never be discovered. First, the tools available for consumers to actively search for products have become more sophisticated. For instance, Google allows for increasingly granular searches, which are bound to result in better matches with the idiosyncrasies of people's identities. Second, recommendation systems (for example, Amazon) are becoming more and more accurate, and some services (for example, Spotify) have been praised for their ability to infer the identities of their users and serve their preferences. For instance, every week Spotify suggests music that is often unknown to users and yet aligned with their taste, allowing people to deepen their knowledge of the music genres they identify with. Intriguingly, the performance of recommendation systems increases with usage, suggesting that AI might be particularly beneficial for the product experience of identifiers, who are presumably heavier users. Third, AI enables behavioral targeting, that is, detecting the online behavior of individuals and using it to display advertisements that should be most relevant. Summers et al. (2016) showed that such ads, when accurate and explicitly recognized as building on users' previous behavior (for example, with the AdChoices icon), can act as social labels, ultimately informing users about their consumption identities. Given the comparative effectiveness of behaviorally targeted ads relative to their traditional counterparts (Yan et al. 2009; see Goldfarb and Tucker 2011; Lodish and Reed 2011, for some drawbacks of behavioral targeting), one can speculate that behaviorally targeted ads often act as facilitators of identity-based consumption, and ultimately of self-verification. Future research should study how personalized recommendations enabled by algorithm facilitate identity-based consumption.

Nonetheless, AI does not come without downsides. In the past, we made many important decisions based on our values, viewpoints and ultimately our reflections of self. Occasionally, these values and viewpoints might contradict one another. And here comes AI to save the day. The algorithm knows our previous behaviors and similar others' behaviors better than we

know ourselves. It allows us to delegate choice and agency to the machine. It takes care of our conundrum and saves our effort. For example, in the past, when there are two equally strong job candidates, employers need to carefully weigh each relevant attribute. Do they want someone who is very competent in the task but a bit shy? Or do they want someone who is less accomplished but more sociable? Now, algorithms can easily decide who is more suitable for the job with minimal effort from the employers. Isn't this development marvelous? But here is the catch: by surrendering our choice and agency to algorithms, we are also losing an essential part of our identity as human beings: the free will to choose who we want to be. Eventually, we might even lose our uniqueness when algorithms are shaping us towards a certain direction based on our digital footprints.

In fact, people are starting to see algorithms as a threat to their identities as human beings, as demonstrated by the "uncanny valley" phenomenon. The concept of the uncanny valley suggests that people have repulsive feelings towards robots which appear almost, but not exactly, like real human beings (Mori 1970). This uncanny feeling might be driven by the mechanistic view of human behavior that these robots exhibit. The unnatural behavior displayed by the robots challenges human uniqueness and as a result undermines our sense of personal and human identity (MacDorman et al. 2009). Furthermore, even when an algorithm consistently outperforms human judgment, people prefer to trust the human judgement. They are more averse to algorithmic forecasters than to a human forecaster after both make the same error (Dietvorst et al. 2015). This implies that people might not be able to incorporate algorithms into their sense of self. Related to error, algorithms are far from being error-free. For instance, a risk assessment algorithm used by a United States court was found to be biased against black people (Buranyi 2017). This algorithm was more likely to imprison black people and give them longer sentences than it otherwise would for the same crimes committed by other races. Northpointe, the company that programs the algorithm, defended the accuracy of its test and did not publicly disclose the calculations used to arrive at defendants' risk scores. Delegating choices to these biased algorithms poses the question of who should be responsible for the mistake; and ultimately, who we are as human beings if we let algorithms decide our fate. Future research should focus on whether AI threatens people's sense of identity.

HUMAN ENHANCEMENT

Most people are interested in self-enhancement, broadly defined. That is, they prefer positive over negative self-views (Sedikides and Gregg

2008). There are several reasons why people engage in behaviors that are considered to enhance their selves. First, people generally want to view themselves in a flattering light, so that they can verify themselves in a desired way (Sedikides 1993). In addition, people want to be seen by others in a positive manner (Jones 1973; Swann et al. 1992). To achieve this goal, they carefully carve and project a desired image and are actively involved in impression management (Goffman 1959; Schlenker 1980). These are prominent reasons why people read, exercise or put on make-up. Most of these self-enhancement projects could fundamentally affect one's conception of self. People who become more intelligent or better-looking might see their new selves differently from their old selves.

Technological developments have always increased opportunities for human enhancement, with products such as anabolic steroids for larger muscles, energy drinks for greater alertness, and contact lenses for better vision. However, recent developments in biomedical engineering, such as dietary supplements and genetic engineering, are likely to eventually bring this to a new level. In this section, we will focus on performance-enhancing drugs and devices, which are becoming increasingly prevalent.

Drugs that can boost performance have been available for decades. Consider anabolic steroids: synthetic variations of testosterone that are known to boost physical performance or appearance. These steroids are generally considered unethical for professional sportsmen. However, many athletes still engage in doping (Alaranta et al. 2006; Anshel and Russell 1997). Many sportsmen engage in doping behavior because they are dissatisfied with their body and performance (Blouin and Goldfield 1995). Taking performance-enhancing drugs allow these athletes to see and verify themselves as a better athlete than they otherwise would have been (Ehrnborg and Rosen 2009).

Performance-enhancement drugs are by no means limited to boost physical performance. Breakthroughs in medical research have brought about numerous drugs that enable us to drastically increase our mental capability. Many such drugs were invented to cure psychological illnesses. For example, Prozac is used for the treatment of depression. However, many people who are otherwise healthy take Prozac to allegedly boost their mood (Hellerman 2006). The same goes for Viagra (erectile dysfunction) and Ritalin (attention deficit disorder). Ritalin is now used by many healthy people, especially college students, to increase their concentration and attention span (McCabe et al. 2005). Apart from drugs, advances in biomedical engineering have facilitated the diffusion of performance-enhancing devices. For instance, the transcranial stimulator was originally invented to battle neuropathic pain and depressive disorder. Now, it is sold to common households to improve cognitive abilities. Foc.us, a company

which commercialized the device, claimed that the device could “enhance alertness, boost focus and increase capacity to learn” and even “help you run further and faster.” This technology is reported even to change people’s motivation and behavior (Mishra et al. 2010).

In the examples illustrated above, healthy people seek medication not to deal with psychological issues, but to improve performance and even to alter their sense of self (Kramer and Brody 1994). Such enhancement technologies could help as well as hinder identity formation. On one hand, some people believe that these technologies help them to reach their full potential and be their more authentic self (Elliott 2004). For example, some people who take antidepressants daily reported feeling generally happier and more like themselves (Hellerman 2006). On the other hand, some people view themselves as less authentic when they use these enhancement technologies (Bolt and Schermer 2009). Consequently, people are more reluctant to take drugs that enhance traits considered to be fundamental to self-identity, than to take drugs affecting traits that are considered less fundamental (Riis et al. 2008).

One of the most interesting features of these enhancement technologies is their connection with central aspects of one’s self-conception (Elliott 2004). Advocates of these technologies maintain that enhancement projects could help individuals to release their potential and become who they truly are (Hellerman 2006). Critics, however, suggest that these technologies might lead consumers to perceive themselves as inauthentic and thus threaten their sense of self (DeGrazia 2005). Moreover, these enhancement technologies may not simply improve one’s mental or physical performance, but also change characteristics fundamental to one’s identity. Elliott (1999) asserts:

What is worrying about so-called “enhancement technologies” may not be the prospect of improvement but the more basic fact of altering oneself, of changing capacities and characteristics fundamental to one’s identity. . . . Deep questions seem to be at issue when we talk about changing a person’s identity, the very core of what the person is. Making him smarter, giving him a different personality or even giving him a new face – these things cut much closer to the bone They mean, in some sense, transforming him into a new person.

Advances in biomedical engineering have continued to create groundbreaking inventions that could alter appearance, increase performance, change motivation or even personalities. As Harari (2016) noted in his book *Homo Deus*, soon we will be using enhancement technologies such as neural implants, gene manipulation, bionic hands, artificial eyes or nanobots in the bloodstream, to upgrade ourselves mentally and physically. We will upgrade from *Homo sapiens* (man the wise) to *Homo deus*

(man the god). Meanwhile, the question of how our sense of self or even our identity as human beings would evolve remains unanswered. Future research should investigate the conditions under which these enhancement technologies may obscure or facilitate people's self-expression.

CONCLUSIONS

We have discussed how technology helps and hinders identity-based consumption across five technological domains. On the one hand, technology expands the range of options that individuals have for holding on to identities and for positive self-verification. On the other hand, technological progress, together with great and obvious advantages, also presents challenges for consumers. These counterforces brought about by technology yield an exciting research agenda. The list of technological trends discussed here is far from exhaustive, but we hope that this chapter will provide food for thought and stimulate future research in this important area.

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17. Identity verification through pain in extraordinary consumer experiences

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INTRODUCTION

Pain is an inevitable and powerful sensation that can regulate human behaviour. Research acknowledges that the experience of pain – rather than its avoidance – is key to identity and can therefore play an important role in motivating people to engage in certain consumption experiences (Scott et al. 2017). Identity can be defined as a category of personhood to which consumers self-associate (Reed et al. 2012). Crucially, categories of personhood become an identity once a consumer treats the label as central to their self-conception, which can ultimately shape their beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. Research notes how in certain contexts pain is central to a person's self-conception. Consider, for instance, the mixed martial arts community, whose participants subject themselves to pain in order to experience themselves as “real” men (Green 2011). Likewise, the pain that accompanies plastic surgery is crucial to consumers' sense that they are becoming a new person (Schouten 1991). Self-harm and harm to others is also used as a “coping” mechanism, as shown by elite chefs who turn to violence to alleviate fear of failure (Gill and Burrow 2018), and those who wish to temporarily alleviate mental distress by causing harm to themselves (Edmonson et al. 2016).

While research hints at the significance of painful experiences with respect to identity work, no research to date explores the role of pain in well-established identity-driven behaviors such as identity verification: the process in which consumers process feedback from the environment to determine progress towards an ideal identity (Reed et al. 2012). The goal of this chapter is therefore to investigate the role of pain in identity verification. Our research reveals that through pain, identity verification work can be intensified, suspended or refocused. We situate these three pathways on a continuum ranging from low, to high levels of identity verification work (see Figure 17.1). First, intensification of identity verification occurs when consumers engage in high levels of identity verification work induced by long episodes of bearable but stinging pains. Skillfully dealing with, and

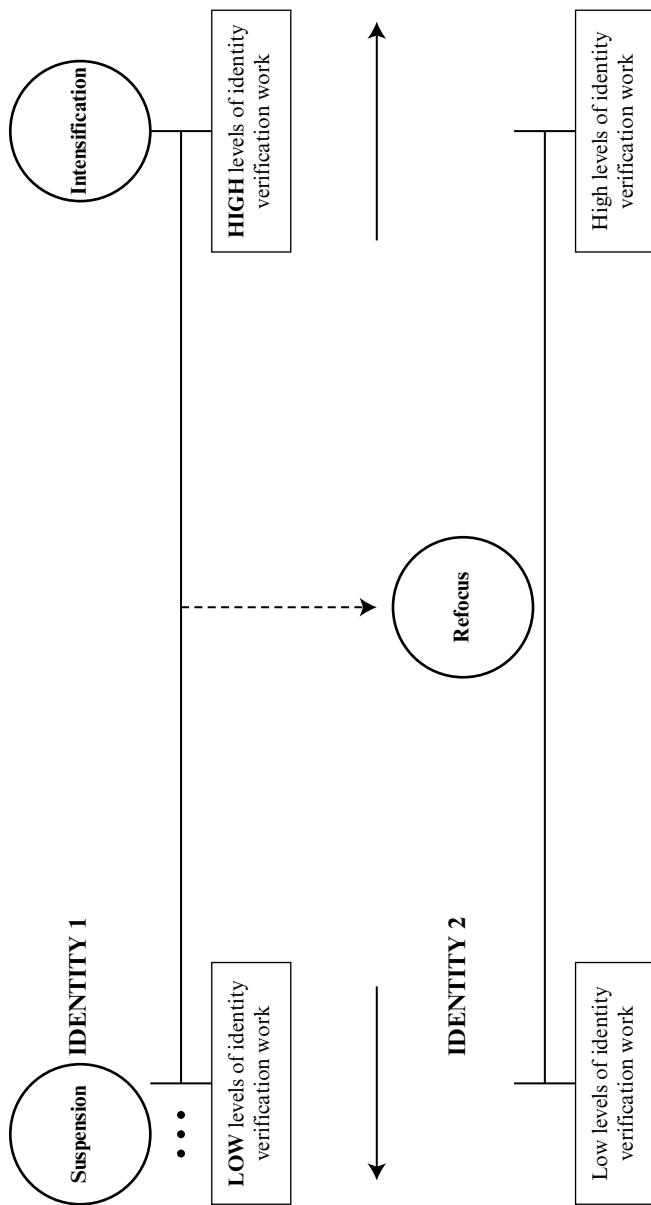


Figure 17.1 Continuum of pain-driven identity verification work

reflecting upon, this pain triggers deep introspective processes that allow consumers to better understand who they are and grow beyond themselves. Second, suspending identity verification occurs when consumers engage in low levels of identity work induced by short episodes of striking pain. This pain suspends consumers' ability to acquire self-confirmatory reactions, providing temporary relief from self-verification. Third, refocusing identity verification is not defined by high or low levels of identity verification work but by refocusing their self-concept. Here, aches and pains cause introspective consideration of the extent to which their behaviors meet mutually exclusive concepts of the self.

These three processes emerge out of ethnographic research in three experiential settings marked by pain: pilgrims walking the Camino de Santiago, participants undertaking the Tough Mudder obstacle course and British football fans recovering from drug consumption. Though each context differs, they each provide critical insight into the way pain fits into different processes associated with self-verification. The chapter begins by grounding the study within the theoretical context of pain, experience and identity verification. Following a description of the research methods through which data was collected, we present findings that highlight how pain intensifies, suspends and refocuses the identity verification process. Finally, we consider the implications of our findings.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Painful Experiences and Consumers' Identity Work

Pain is often viewed as an experience consumers wish to avoid. However, recent research shows that consumers proactively seek out pain, particularly in extraordinary experiences (Scott et al. 2017). Understanding how and why consumers appreciate the sensation of pain requires an exploration of their identity work which refers to the activities individuals engage in to repair, strengthen or revise their sense of self (Costas et al. 2016). Research in this vein reveals how the sedentary nature of office life is temporarily alleviated through partaking in Tough Mudder events (Scott et al. 2017). Similarly, experiences of pain and hardship along the Inca Trail in Peru allow participants to explore sidelined forms of identity (Cutler et al. 2014).

In sum, consumer research has made connections between pain, identity work, and social and cultural contexts. We argue however, that further advances can be made by research that captures how pain is instrumental to well-established identity-based consumer behaviors, such as

self-verification. By exploring the experience of pain in three experimental settings and illustrating the function of pain with respect to identity verification, we add nuance to nascent consumer research on identity work, pain and extraordinary consumer experiences.

Self-Verification Theory

While we may carry with us multiple identities, specific self-concepts may increasingly punctuate our existence, come to override others, and may be invoked in everyday situations (Reed 2004). The self-verification principle claims that once an identity has become salient, people will actively monitor the extent to which they have stayed true to that identity (Reed et al. 2012). To do so they proactively seek out situations and relationships in which they stay true to their salient identity, and seek positive feedback from the external environment, all for the purpose of creating a “social reality” for themselves “that verifies and confirms their self-conceptions” (Swann 1983, p. 33). For example, a runner who is no longer able to enjoy their passion due to injury may interact with an online running community by posting and reading related news stories. This process affirms and verifies their salient identity. Identity verification is a cognitive process, which demands ongoing identity work (Stryker and Burke 2000). When the feedback received from the external environment “matches” their salient identity, positive identity verification offers an “emotional anchor” and a “sense of security” in turbulent life circumstances through reinforcing the self over time (Stets and Cast 2007, p. 522).

Identity-verification theory suggests that individuals seek out situations and relationships in which their self-views are confirmed (Swann 1983). The sought-after identity therefore operates like an ideal identity (Reed et al. 2012; Higgins 1987) in which discrepancies between the actual and the sought-after self motivate the individual to exert behavior that closes the gap (Stryker and Burke 2000).

Although these different studies have generated a wealth of valuable insights they provide only a partial explanation of the role of painful experiences in identity verification. By showing how pain intensifies (high levels of identity verification), suspends (low levels of identity verification) and refocuses (identity verification shifts focus onto different salient self-concept), this chapter addresses the neglected relationship between pain and identity verification processes and how pain causes consumers to encounter different identity outcomes.

CONTEXTS AND METHODS

To address the relationship between pain and identity verification, we draw on data from three ethnographies. Our field sites each present unique ways in which identities can be verified during episodes of physical pain. First, we developed an ethnographic account of the pilgrim's journey on the Camino de Santiago, which comprises the network of pilgrim routes established throughout Europe and culminates at the tomb of St James in north-west Spain. Research shows that the acute pain of aching muscles and blisters is a key aspect of pilgrimage (Cova and Cova 2019; Frey 1998; Husemann and Eckhardt 2018). Crucially, pain focuses attention to the self, creating opportunities for participants to think and reflect on their identity standards (Husemann and Eckhardt 2018).

Second, we draw from an ethnography of Tough Mudder to explore how and why people risk permanent disabilities, paralysis, heart attacks and even death to flee the burden of identity work (Scott et al. 2017). The half-marathon mud run comprises an 18–21 kilometer assault course, which promises 25 extreme military obstacles including running through burning hay bales, crawling through 10,000 volts of electrical wires, and plunging into freezing water.

Third, we draw on ethnographic data collected from a British football fan community to illuminate how drug consumption before and during match days reveals the moments in which pain appears in the lives of “hard-core” football fans (Hill 2015). Aches, nausea and exhaustion are symptoms that fans described. Spending prolonged periods of time travelling with fellow supporters made it possible to identify the key dimensions of drug abuse which resulted in a refined corpus of spoken narratives in which football fans encountered the physical and mental pain of drugs leaving their body's system, and how this challenged their “self-views” (Stets and Cast 2007).

Across each ethnography, various types of data have been collected, including: (1) participant observation; (2) field notes; (3) visual materials; (4) in-depth interviews; and (5) netnography. Seeking to explore the role of physical pain in a consumer's effort to verify their “ideal” identity, we used this ethnographic data set to reveal how pain creates or prevents “verifying possibilities” for consumers: the experience of pain can lead to consumers intensifying, suspending or refocusing their identity verification work. Particular attention was paid to opportunities to reproduce, maintain and sustain painful experiences, and how consumers and their reference groups respond to and reflect upon their self-presentation behaviour. The data was subject to a four-stage process of analysis that mobilized established conventions for systematically organizing qualitative data to draw out emergent themes (Gioia et al. 2013) which we present next.

FINDINGS

This section illustrates the link between pain and the self-verifying work performed by participants across three diverse experiential contexts. Drawing from Reed et al.'s (2012) notion of identity verification – the introspective processing of feedback received from the external environment to determine progress toward an ideal identity – we reveal a spectrum of self-verification work that occurs when experiencing pain. We illustrate how intensification, suspension and refocusing are situated on an identity verification continuum in Figure 17.1.

We show how pilgrims intensify their identity verification work as they experience pain. That is, they engage in high levels of identity verification work in which they learn who they really are, as well as how much they can achieve, as they deal with chronic pain. We also show how Tough Mudder participants suspend their identity work when experiencing pain, engaging in low levels of identity verification work. The intense and striking experience of pain from ice-cold water and electric shocks suspends participants' ability to process self-confirmatory cues and, in so doing, temporarily lessens the need for self-verification. Hardcore British football fans use pain to refocus their identity verification work by shifting focus from one identity towards another. Rather than engaging in high or low levels of identity verification work, fans use the pain stemming from drug abuse to redefine the limits of their self-concept as they become caught between two contrasting feedback environments: domestic home life and the football fan subculture. We conclude that the experience of physical pain offers various identity verification opportunities.

Pilgrims Walking the Camino: Pain to Intensify Self-Verification

Pain is a key aspect of pilgrimage, playing an important role in pilgrims' journeys of self-discovery (Cova and Cova 2019; Frey 1998; Husemann and Eckhardt 2018). Walking through the countryside for weeks, enduring adverse weather conditions, and carrying heavy backpacks and hiking gear, causes most pilgrims to suffer from blisters, swollen ankles, muscle inflammations or back pain at some point during their journey. Pilgrims experience a pain that is low in intensity but incessant, which continuously reminds them of their physical existence. The focus on the self offers opportunities to think, reflect and slow down; physically as well as mentally (Husemann and Eckhardt 2018).

This subsection shows how in the context of pilgrimage, pain serves as an intensifier of identity verification (see Figure 17.1). It shows how pilgrims collect feedback by listening to their painful bodies to intensify their

identity verification work. This happens in two ways. First, pain teaches pilgrims to respect their “selves” (that is, pain shows you who you are, and who you are not). Second, pain allows pilgrims to grow beyond what they consider to be their true self.

Respecting the self: pain shows you who you are (not)

People seek constant identity verification (Reed et al. 2012): they seek to be the person who they believe they are. But who is this person? In the context of pilgrimage, people are reminded of who they are and what they can do when they experience pain that pushes them to their limits. Nico, a 26-year-old market analyst from Germany, explains that he is in constant dialogue with himself to manage the physical hardship of his pilgrimage journey. He is “checking in” with his own body to make sure he is not overestimating his capabilities; to make sure he is not reaching out to an unrealistic ideal self. Nico says, “Okay, if you really listen to your body, can you still go the other days? Should you take a break, should you not walk, should you take a bus?” Pain reminds pilgrims of their capabilities, of what they can do. Simultaneously, pain reveals their limits. Josh, a 57-year-old information technology (IT) project manager living in Australia, reflects on this: “I think [here on the Camino] people [are] tryin’ to do too much too soon. They think they’re young and they’re fit and they’re healthy and they can do this. Hu-uh, no.” The experience of pain reminds pilgrims in their physical limits. Yet this can be as illuminating as it is painful. Field notes from a discussion with two fellow pilgrims about the experience of pain on the Camino demonstrate how pain “makes you humble.” Realizing that all walking pilgrims need to deal with the same physical issues, independent of their background, puts our understanding about one’s own relevance in the world into perspective. Thus, pilgrims who experience pain engage in high levels of identity verification work by listening to their inner voices and understanding their (physical) limits. They are continuously being reminded of their true (verifiable) self, which reinforces their understanding of who they are (not) (Reed and Forehand 2016).

Grow beyond your self: pain shows you who you can be

The pain-induced process of introspection intensifies pilgrims’ reflection about themselves; who they are as a person, or who they would like to be. Ulrike, a 23-year-old student from Germany, suffered from blisters throughout her journey. She states, “for me it was really hard to keep on going. I wanted to go home . . . I [had] really so much pain . . . I still have blisters.” Despite the discomfort and hardship, Ulrike kept walking. Ulrike’s experience of going through physical hardship and finding ways to manage her pains increased her self-confidence and allowed her to make

future-directed identity-relevant decisions; “I made the decision for myself that I keep on studying, to finish it. Because I was thinking about quitting because, it was too hard. But now [after having finished the Camino] I feel like I can do it.” Ulrike’s experience of physical pain makes her reflect on her limits and priorities, which results in newly found inner strength and, crucially, the future direction of her career. It is almost as if Ulrike is extending her existing identity or adopting a new identity, due to successfully dealing with pain (Reed and Forehand 2016). The management of physical pain is a powerful catalyst for self-development on the Camino. Through pain, pilgrims grow beyond what they consider their true self to verify a stronger self. Theoretically speaking, pain can serve as an internal feedback mechanism that moves the individual from an actual self towards an ideal self (Reed et al. 2012).

Tough Mudder Participants: Pain to Suspend Self-Confirmatory Reactions

This subsection reveals how knowledge workers (Costas and Kärreman 2016), bored by the sedentary nature of their work, become enchanted by the intense pain of the Tough Mudder obstacles. The disabling pain provided by the Arctic Enema freezing water obstacle and the electric pulses of the Electroshock Therapy obstacle (twice the voltage used in a livestock fence) relieves knowledge workers from the burden of gathering feedback to verify their self-conceptions (Swann 1983). As such, this subsection shows how, in the context of Tough Mudder, pain suspends identity verification work, with participants engaging in low levels of identity verification work (see Figure 17.1). Suspending identity verification work happens through two routes: (1) by pain restricting consumers’ capacity to acquire self-confirmatory reactions; and (2) by facilitating the temporary forgetting of self-verification processes.

Pain suspends the ability to acquire self-confirmatory reactions

When considering the demands of maintaining the self – whether it be through dress codes, professional associations or material possessions – even individuals who use their props successfully and are treated in a self-confirmatory manner may need respite from their identity-verifying work (Swann 1983). The painful obstacles experienced at Tough Mudder can be conceptualized as what Bennett (1986) terms “unregulated lands”: places of carnival praxis that disrupt one’s ability to acquire self-confirmatory reactions. Field notes describing “gargling, strangling screams” from the Electroshock Therapy obstacle, followed by bodies lying “unconscious on the ground,” are a case in point. Field notes detail identity suspension through the feeling of being “submerged” and “everything stopping” to

“go somewhere else.” One of the most notable aspects of Tough Mudder is how pain becomes so intense that reality becomes suspended in an experience known as “whitening” (Le Breton 2015), causing participants to become locked out of a system that previously provided them with confirmatory feedback. Furthermore, before entering the painful obstacles the social consumption of pain creates a platform to experiment with self-conceptions at a group level; this continues after the event with the comparison of wounds and scars. For engineering student Mike, Tough Mudder provided a space for him resist ongoing pressures to maintain his ideal presentation of self (Reed et al. 2012). He described how in preparation for pain he “got a hair-cut Mohawk style” and “got spray painted yellow hair” to make him “look more badass.” For Mike, identity suspension was a strong incentive to diverge from his salient identity and open the gap between his actual and his sought-after self (Stryker and Burke 2000).

Pain facilitates the temporary forgetting of self-verification processes

For knowledge workers who spend their days sitting in an office, one symptom of staying true to one’s identity is the weariness of maintaining a “cerebral self” (Ehrenberg 2009, p. 17). Our data suggest that pain facilitates temporary forgetting from identity regulation (Watson 2008) by acting as a safety valve (Scott et al. 2017). Investment Banker Matthew is “paralyzed” by his office work, describing how “you do your 9 to 5, and your days pass by doing the same mundane tasks.” He explains that “we work in jobs we don’t enjoy . . . to impress people we don’t like.” In the Electric Eel obstacle (where Mudders crawl through electric wires dangling into stagnant water) he describes how “I hit my knee so hard I couldn’t even feel the electric pain,” and exiting the Arctic Enema obstacle he described having “brain freeze.” This finding reinforces the link between the sensation of intense pain, and the inability to reproduce, maintain and sustain regular cognitive processes. Acute feelings of discontent with self-awareness (Heatherton and Baumeister 1991), and the phoniness of interaction partners who appraise one’s self-conception, leads many participants to seek out painful activities that preclude them from identity work. Ernie describes how “generally I wouldn’t put myself in such a helpless position,” and Ed describes how “10,000 volts is a scary number. As far as I know people can’t survive that.” In contrast, Richard details how “these events, it’s not day to day life, I mean it’s fantasy land, you have endorphins going the entire time.” Such dream states preclude any monitoring and managing of their identity, and for a brief period Tough Mudder protects from any identity verification work. Participants gravitate toward an environment (for example, mud immersion and electric shocks) that no longer supports

their self-conceptions and provides no defined boundaries through which self-confirmatory reactions can take place.

Football Supporters: Pain to Verify and Refocus Self-Concept

This final subsection shows the role of pain in verifying the transforming self-concept during significant life transitions (Schau et al. 2009). The context in which British hardcore football fans experience pain is peculiar, and is worth exploring. Crucially, fans help to create the carnival atmosphere upon which Premier League Football financially depends. But to do this, fans consume excessive amounts of drugs and alcohol. As a result, fans experience prolonged periods of pain following matches, and it is this pain that is particularly significant for supporters when reflecting on the extent to which they are meeting their self-conceptions.

While Premier League Football boasts of being family-friendly (Hill 2015), subsections of supporters use football as a vehicle for carnivalesque revelry (Bradford and Sherry 2015; Goulding et al. 2009). As ethnographic field notes illustrate, “the craic around matches is at least as important as what occurs on the pitch” (Pearson 2012, p.135). Joe, a 25-year-old professional working in finance, outlines what his friends put their bodies through fortnightly to acquire self-confirmatory feedback: “Crates of beer, bottles of wine, people will have other stuff with them [drugs, often cocaine and ecstasy]. And we just get on it for 24 hours, sometimes longer.” Joe describes how the effect of upholding strategies of self-presentation can be paralyzing: “You spend Mondays and Tuesday sitting in the bath, not joking, longing for death.” So why do they do it?

Below, we detail how, in the context of hardcore football supporters, pain allows fans to shift between multiple identities to finally (re-)focus on the identity that they wish to verify in the future. Collecting feedback from their painful bodies as well as from external reactions to the visible traces of pain from two competing feedback environments (that is, at home and travelling to games), leads fans to shift from one identity to another; that is, identity verification work does not map onto notions of high or low, but is instead refocused (see Figure 17.1). Refocusing identity verification occurs with pain facilitating: (1) subcultural integration; and (2) identity decoupling.

Pain as integrative for subcultural membership

The two-day-long hangover is important for neophyte supporters who are yet to be integrated into the youth subcultures. Andy explains that taking drugs produces shared experiences with the group, confirming his self-conception as a certain kind of football supporter: “You want to fit in . . . it’s all part of what it means to be a footy supporter: those highs with

your mates . . . and then the days feeling like shite after.” Andy describes how the three-day hangover-cum-comedown rubberstamps membership to the group to reaffirm a desirable supporter identity. Excessive drug and alcohol consumption and the related pain is therefore an authenticating act (Arnould and Price 2000) that integrates neophytes into the group. Once integrated, longitudinal studies into hardcore football fans show little diversity in their self-confirmatory behavior (Pearson 2012). That is, until life-stage transformations force them to change their self-views and the extent to which they are confirming their revised self-concept.

Pain as decoupling from self-concept

Routine is infused into the historical and social construction of what it means to be a British football fan. But while supporters’ behaviours remain the same, their home life inevitably changes. Marriage, childbirth and stress stemming from work and mortgage repayments shape supporters’ sense of self. As supporters reach their thirties, life transitions apply pressure on their sense of self, with new identities being placed on them (Schau et al. 2009). Journalist Gareth describes how the pressures of being a responsible husband conflicted with his once dominant supporter identity:

I couldn’t do it anymore. The days after the match were unbearable. . . I’m doing my hardest to not look like I want the ground to eat me up . . . And your wife looks at you with a face that says, “you really shouldn’t be doing it any more should you?”

Pain in this instance does not integrate Gareth further into the subculture. Instead, it acts as a catalyst for dissipation with his subcultural-based identity. As Gareth adds, “It made me realize I’m much too old to be doing this. I had to become a bit more responsible.”

CONCLUSION

The goal of this chapter was to interrogate the role of pain in the process of identity verification. Based on ethnographic field work in three experiential consumption contexts where pain is salient, we add to the growing literature on experiential consumption and identity work by showing how a specific sensation – pain – can open up opportunities for identity-verifying work. By drawing on Reed et al.’s (2012) notion of identity verification – the introspective processing of feedback received from the external environment to determine progress toward an ideal identity – our analysis reveals that the experience of pain offers three identity verification opportunities: intensifying, suspending and refocusing.

Research shows that the experience of pain and hardship patterns how identity and corporeality are explored and confronted by consumers (Cutler et al. 2014), revealing that pain leads to an identity block that disables individuals from their desire to maintain their self-concept (Costas and Kärreman 2016). Similarly, consumer research has shown that, during the painful cosmetic process of identity reconstruction, consumers incorporate the possible self into a revised self-concept (Schouten 1991). This chapter extends this growing body of consumer research by focusing on consumers' identity verification work during painful experiences. We introduce the continuum of pain-driven identity verification work (Figure 17.1) to systematically illustrate this relationship.

Figure 17.1 illustrates how identity verification work can unfold during painful experiences in the form of a continuum ranging from high to low levels of identity work. Through pain, identity verification work can be intensified (high levels of identity verification work, for example in pilgrimage); it can be suspended (low levels identity verification work, for example in Tough Mudder challenges); or it can be refocused (identity verification work is shifted to focus on a different identity or self-concept, for example in football fandom).

Intensifying identity verification work is grounded in the promotion of self-reflexivity and self-consciousness. In a low-intensity painful experience, reality slows down (Husemann and Eckhardt 2018), helping consumers to purposefully collect and contain feedback. Through carefully listening to their painful feet and toes (Cova and Cova 2019), pilgrims collect feedback that is residing within their own bodies, engaging in high levels of identity verification work. Reflecting upon and dealing with this type of pain over an extended period of time allows consumers to better understand who they are (not) and offers opportunities for self-growth. Thus, consistent and almost chronic pain triggers an intense introspective process of identity work and self-verification.

Suspending identity verification is grounded in the notion that pain blocks consumers' self-verifying behavior. Once intense pain is being experienced it suspends consumers' ability to acquire self-confirmatory reactions facilitating temporary relief from self-verification. Participants now engage in low levels of identity verification work. The suspension works on the basis that the body is not a passive and empty container, but an interaction partner engaged in confirmatory or disconfirmity feedback or, in this case, no feedback at all. The striking pain of crawling through electric wires intercepts the usual social standards that uphold the self-verifying feedback loop. During these intense episodes of pain it is possible to temporarily forget dominant social interactions that stage self-confirmatory environments (for example, individuals are knocked unconscious).

Refocusing identity verification draws on the notion of pain as an underlying driver of identity change through life transitions. In a painful experience, subcultural affiliation can emerge out of the challenging sensation (for example, substance abuse). Alternatively, individuals may use their pain to redefine the limits of their self-concept (for example, refocusing from “one of the lads” to a “caring husband”). Here pain is critical in the refocusing of the identity upon which verification is based. Clearly, not all identities are self-determined; they are placed on people. In this instance, pain, while being an “authenticating act” (Arnould and Price 2000) at one stage in life, can also trigger the refocusing of self-image as an individual becomes caught between two contrasting feedback environments (for example, the home and the subculture).

Beyond the identification of these three processes, we also contribute to identity verification theory by illustrating how pain is a driver of identity verification work which previous studies have not yet touched upon (e.g., Reed et al. 2012; Stets and Cast 2007). In particular we show how the feedback that triggers identity verification is not necessarily rooted in the external environments but can also reside in the body.

In conclusion, this chapter suggests that painful experiences play a significant role in the identity verification process: to intensify, suspend and refocus the self. The different lines of explanation presented here reflect extremes on a continuum, from pilgrims to Tough Mudders, and football fans. When considering the interplay between pain and identity on a broader level, we argue that various types of painful experiences can influence identity verification beyond those that have been presented in this study. In different ways, tough and bitter experiences may give consumers a sense of achievement and challenge which intensifies their inner power, identity and self-transformation (Dawson 2015; Liu et al. 2018). Pain does not render a self-verifier devoid of situational pressures, unstable behavior patterns and social realities. Rather, the pain that pervades the body is orchestrated to free individuals from old identity constraints to create new representational possibilities: divergent, existential and embodied modes of being.

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18. The creation of identity and brand meaning: the automatic versus creative use of mental models in language

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MENTAL MODELS AND IDENTITY

Mental models are linguistic representations that people use to create a sense of identity and reality, and to make sense of the world around them (Holland and Quinn 1987). They become internalized based on life experiences, cognitive abilities and general acumen. They represent cognitive toolsets with which people reason, make decisions and determine how to behave (Jones et al. 2011). The neurological systems that underpin mental models rely on repeated encoding, which generates dominant neural pathways that process particular types of inputs, thinking and memory (that is, long-term potentiation; Miller et al. 2018). Mental models can range from surface-level (for example, how we ought to behave in public) to deep-rooted values and beliefs (Rydén et al. 2017) and are shared to some degree within subcultures or an entire culture (Ringberg et al. 2007). Mental models are also referred to as cognitive schemas, and guide how a person thinks and feels about self (identity) and others in a given setting (Reed et al. 2012). They are also referred to as cultural models, because they represent socio-culturally influenced understandings, assumptions and outlook on the world, that function as “taken for granted” realities (Fryberg and Markus 2007). For example, Fryberg and Markus (2007) revealed, in a series of studies, that cultural models of education for European Americans, Asian Americans and American Indians established different goals and aspirations across these cultural groups. Whereas European Americans held self-focused academic goals, Asian Americans and American Indians focused on how higher education could help their families and communities. Consequently, mental models shape and inform perception, cognition, emotion and motivation, giving consumers a “mental map” of how to be a person in the world (Fryberg and Rhys 2007). The mental models consumers have, whether purposefully learned or not, constitute the building blocks of their identities.

As sense-making depends upon which mental models a consumer holds and which become activated (that is, become diagnostic), meaning is based on mental projections, and consequently not created by or resting within objects, symbols, practices and behavior (Ringberg and Reihlen 2008). In this vein, the semantic unit – birthday party – represents a symbolic construction that prescribes a series of rituals, routines, practices and representations (for example, gifts, singing, cake, gatherings, and so on; Rousseau 2001), but only for those consumers who have been inculcated with the mental model related to birthdays. The meaning produced by internalized shared mental models leads to similar sense-making of similar moments and experiences.

MENTAL MODELS AND LANGUAGE

We posit that when linguistic devices – such as texts, tropes, metaphors, metonyms, symbols, and so on – become salient, they serve as sense-making mediators that provide meaning to objects, situations and experiences (e.g., Taylor 2016). This follows Reed et al. (2012, p. 313): “Because language is intimately related to culture, language cues are one means of increasing the temporary salience of a cultural identity and . . . the influence of that culture on cognitions and behavior.” However, for this transfer of meaning to take place, language users must already have internalized the meaning of particular words, grammar, metaphors, pauses, tropes, and so on. In reality, this internalization happens in an ongoing manner driven by repeated exposures to confirmative and/or dis-affirmative reactions by other people and general socio-cognitive feedback (for example, texts, television, social media, and so on). As we grow up, we become exposed to an amalgam of impressions (that is, culture), some of which become internalized to form our identity structures.

Research on mental models contributes to the understanding of culture’s influence on identity constructions through the examination of meaning units (tropes, metaphors, and so on) embedded in the shared use of language. This is especially the case when considering the extent to which the creation of identity for self and others is deliberate or an unintentional enactment of mental models. It is quite obvious to native speakers when a person speaks a language without having access to its related socio-cultural value system and shared mental models that underpin linguistic expressions, as much of the meaning remains at the superficial and factual level (for example, directions, ordering a cup of coffee). The deciphering of deep structures that govern the use of language by natives is almost as difficult as it is for archaeologists to decipher the deeper meaning of

ancient texts (even when they know the literal meaning behind such words or signs). And the difficulty increases with the degree of cultural distance between speakers and their interlocutors. Words only gain meaning by virtue of being part of a unique constellation with other words. As Gee (2008, p. 101) says, "Words . . . have meanings only relative to choices (by speakers and writers) and guesses (by hearers and readers) about other words and assumptions about contexts." That is, local and socio-cultural contextual cues, internalized by native speakers, represent the decoding algorithms that set the stage for interpreting the meaning of language. This insight helps to explain why researchers working with artificial intelligence and machine translation have found that it is difficult to translate deeper semantics (meaning) structures across languages, without having access to underlying shared knowledge (that is, mental models) about the world (Holland and Quinn 1987).

Vygotsky's work on mental models and language illustrates this point in more depth. According to Holland and Valsiner (1988), Vygotsky saw language (including words, phrases, sentences, and so on) as the prototypical mediating device, symbol, or a collective creation that we learn by interacting with others, and which acts as the primary means through which mental models are constituted. Mental representations are primarily expressed through language, but also through other means (images, gestures, symbols, and so on). Language and mental models are enmeshed with one another and, as such, engage in a continuous, dynamic feedback loop. Language gains meaning from particular socio-cultural contexts, and then serves as a resource of symbolic meaning from which to build new mental models (that is, sense-making structures). Language gains its meaning through its application within socio-cultural contexts. Translation between languages is only possible insofar as cultural contexts are similar, otherwise little or no meaning would emerge. Culture is carried forth by minds. As such, culture does not exist apart from the mind. Holland and Quinn (1987, p. 16) sum this up when noting: "the intuitions of native speakers about their language are heavily dependent on the intuitions of these natives as culture-bearers." That is, cultural meaning systems are inculcated in rituals, symbols and contextual signifiers to form tacit (that is, intuitive) assumptions which we internalize, rely on and project upon symbols, such as words in text and speech already from an early age. The original notion of culture as a homogenous entity has long been deconstructed (Clifford and Markus 1986; Firat and Venkatesh 1995). Anthropologists have shown, even among tightly knit tribes, the presence of different interpretive communities. Thus, on the surface what appears as shared cultural practices (including symbols, languages, sounds) are interpreted differently across interpretive communities. Interestingly, such

differences are often overlooked as individuals tend to assume that others make sense of stimuli the same way they do. This raises an interesting question, namely whether such differences in interpretations emerge as a result of the workings of creative mindsets, or rather are a result of mindsets which have been exposed to slightly different stimuli during their upbringing, and thus have internalized different subsets of mental models among the larger repertoire of socio-cultural resources of meaning systems.

From within another scientific branch, brain research, it is suggested that neural structures are what enable thought processes. Once these neural pathways are created, the thinking is likely to follow, as thought processes follow the path of least resistance (Mayeseless et al. 2015). Thus, it is tempting to consider that mental models are anchored along these neural structures. This raises another interesting issue, namely whether all aspects of our cognition are enabled and/or confined by these structures. Some biological research suggests that these neural processes may operate without central control (Mayeseless et al. 2015), which leads to the question, “Who then is in charge of our thinking?” or, alternatively, that our meta-cognition (that is, the ability to think or reflect about our thinking) is structured by mental models (neural pathways).

The idea that mental models and language are inextricably enmeshed with one another is also demonstrated by Luna et al. (2008, 2010), who found that each language activates a particular set of socio-cultural models which bilingual-bicultural users rely on. Consequently, when bicultural-bilingual individuals switch between their two native languages, they tacitly access different sets of identity-related mental models. Thus, a change in language leads to differences in self-perception, as well as perception of others. For example, when bilingual-bicultural females were asked to describe themselves, as well as interpret advertisements with females engaged in various activities across languages, different sets of mental models were activated and applied to their interpretations. When participants engaged in the Spanish-language session, they perceived themselves, as well as the females in the ads, as more self-sufficient and extroverted. In the English-language session, they perceived themselves and the females in the same ads as more other-dependent and family-oriented (Luna et al. 2008). This frame-switching happened subconsciously. That is, the female informants (social workers) were not aware that they interacted differently with clients when speaking either Spanish or English. This raises the question of whether identity creation is dynamically formed by a self-critical meta-cognition that uses linguistic structures as toolsets, unbounded by mental models, or is determined by a meta-cognition that represents yet another, albeit sophisticated mental model.

A study by Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) shows that bilingual-biculturals

incorporate, to various degrees, conflicting identities into an internally consistent, integrated identity depending on the perceived compatibility between the two cultural orientations. Whether such integration was based on the workings of a creative and self-reflective, introspective mind, or simply the result of environmental feedback mechanisms and contextual pressures, was not addressed directly as the authors simply point out “perceived compatibility between the two identities” as the acting moderator. In a later article, Benet-Martínez and Haritatos (2005) suggest that the dual-identity integration is driven by dispositional factors (for example, levels of neuroticism) and contextual pressures (for example; linguistic ability and perceived discrimination). Neither neuroticism nor contextual pressures seem to involve a meta-cognitive process, but rather an automated response based on either internal or external stimuli that are not under cognitive control.

It follows from the theory of mental models that identity is influenced by culture, via language. Yet, the question remains open whether meta-cognition works independently of mental models, that is, that it picks freely from mental models (expressed in language as tropes, metaphors, semantic constructs, and so on) to construct a desired identity. The view that meta-cognition exists apart from mental models is exemplified in self-regulation theory (see Carver and Scheier 2000) which regards individuals as having personal control of such regulation. Likewise, Reed et al. (2012, p.317) state that: “consumers constantly engage in a reinforcement monitoring process in which they retrospectively inspect associations within their identity to make sure that they are behaving in a consistent manner when enacting their identity.” This retrospective “monitoring” seems to suggest the presence of an active agency that critically reflects on and monitors internal cognitive processes.

MENTAL MODELS, LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND AGENCY

The above discussion brings us to the core question of this chapter: namely, whether our meta-cognition is bounded by or free to choose among internalized mental models (when these are made salient to our awareness) when constructing identity. That is, do we have a meta-cognition that functions unconstrained by established neural networks, or does meta-cognition merely reflect yet another socio-culturally learned mental model? This conundrum is reflected in the current theoretical divide between the culturalist vis-à-vis the agentic or cognitivist perspectives. Thus, to address the question of whether language, meaning and, hence, identity are

governed by mental models via language and culture (culturalist position), or whether language is used as a resource to creatively express unique identities by a “free” self-reflecting, agentic will (cognitivist position), we briefly introduce these two research streams next.

The Culturalist Perspective

That the interpretations of symbols and practices should be the result of an independent mindset would be conceived as absurd from the culturalist perspective. A question raised from this perspective would be: “How would neural networks be able to form on the go and not draw on already ingrained mental models?” Neuro-linguistic research suggests that such a dynamic process is highly unlikely, as neural networks first have to emerge from ongoing, repetitive inputs. Thus, the culturalist perspective and neuroscience researchers (see Oakley and Halligan 2018) question the existence of an intentional, reflective and creative mindset with a meta-cognition that includes some sort of disembodied, self-reflective mindset that supervises the working of other mental models and neural networks. While the brain continues to establish new neurological pathways, these pathways become established beyond conscious control. The socio-cultural learning of symbolic meaning systems become blueprinted upon our mindset. From a neuroscience perspective, the neuronal pathways become biochemically anchored.

To suggest some sort of independent, self-monitoring cognitive system that exists apart from embodied neural networks is difficult to fathom for traditional culturalists and neuro-scientists. Cultures are regarded as traditions of thoughts and practices, and living in one imbues a person with a host of representations (schemas, categories, rules, procedures, goals, and so on) that guide judgments and decisions (Weber and Morris 2010).

The culturally determined mindset is illustrated by how locals in Martha’s Vineyard in the United States automatically (that is, non-reflectively) exaggerate certain phonological and linguistic markers in their speech when speaking to tourists. Seeing a “tourist” activates their sense of localness, a form of social utility, which in turn stimulates a certain ingrained speech helping the natives to distance themselves from the tourists and summer visitors (Holland and Valsiner 1988; Labov 1972). These linguistic enactments happen at the automatic (non-agentic) level. It follows from the culturalist perspective that sense-making depends on our ability to learn from and regurgitate socio-cultural stimuli. What might on the surface appear as a creative mindset (that is, agency) can be explained as the result of a mindset that relies on a unique set of mental models reflecting an exceptional upbringing, leading to the assumption that agency exists.

Returning to the discussion of branding, we now see that the “response inviting structures” that brands and other symbols have are only possible to decode (as intended) if producers and consumers of such symbols tap into an internalized and mutually shared lexicon, developed based on a shared upbringing, training, education and/or other extended exposure to shared stimuli. In other words, brands work as meaning vessels among people who share mental models related to a given theme that the brand refers to. Consumers who interpret the meaning of a brand differently from the one intended by the brand do so not because of an elevated reflective, introspective and meta-cognitive ability, but simply because they are drawing from, or are located in, a separate symbolic universe governed by different interpretive strategies.

It follows from the mental model position that brands in their communication strategies rely and depend on being able to use relevant response-inviting structures (embedded in advertisements and other signaling entities such as spokespersons). The symbolic meaning of brands that consumers rely on to communicate their identity to self and others only works when other consumers are members of the same interpretive world (culturalist perspective). The culturalist position largely reflects the cultural determinist perspective (Tracy and Robles 2013), which views consumer sense-making as orchestrated by subconsciously located, socio-cultural (mental) models becoming salient (Reed and Forehand 2003; Reed et al. 2012). Here, the self is created and enacted by mental models (see Figure 18.1).

More generally, we could say that which mental models influence consumers’ subconscious interpretation of and preferences for products, brands and marketing campaigns depends on the models’ accessibility and contextual cues that brings them to the fore (e.g., Nedungadi 1990; Aaker 1999). To illustrate how accessibility impacts consumers’ interpretive preferences, Aaker (2000) asked consumers to evaluate a brand that was framed as either rugged (high culture-distinct dimension in United States), peaceful (high culture-distinct dimension in Japan) or exciting (low culture-distinct dimension in United States and Japan). Consumers in the target culture rated the brand more highly when it was framed in a

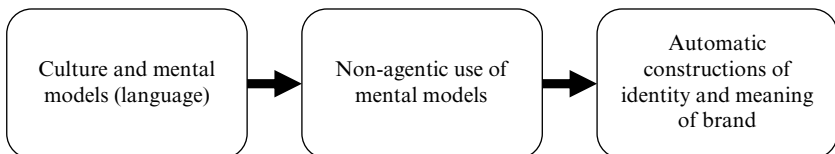


Figure 18.1 Culturalist perspective

high culture-distinct dimension, as compared to those in the non-target culture (Aaker 2000). Another example of subcultural group thinking is when East Asian consumers perceive interdependence to be more important to their identity than do Western consumers (Choi et al. 1999). East Asian consumers attend more to and place greater weight on information that allows them to assimilate with others (Markus and Kitayama 1991, p. 236). This research demonstrates that the mental model activated in a given scenario is largely automatic and stimulated by stimuli that happen outside the awareness of the individual. The contextually driven activation of particular mental models, in turn, activates specific sense-making and even identity constructs. Different situational factors stimulate different senses of self (Forehand et al. 2002). For example, consumers evaluated athlete Michael Jordan as a spokesperson differently when different mental models were primed, with him being either an athlete or an African American (Mitchell et al. 2003). Another example is presented in Azab and Clark's (2017) research on bilingual-bicultural consumers. This research suggests that the influence of language and ethnicity on re-establishing rapport after a customer service failure was different for Hispanic and Caucasian bilingual customers; that is, driven by culture-specific mental models. The researchers demonstrated that the ethnicity of the service representative resulted in the enactment of different consumer identities leading to different understandings and expectations of what the customer service relationship should be, based on the activated mental model. The positive outcome of a service recovery attempt could be predicted, depending on the match between the provider's and the customers' shared thought worlds.

It seems that, in the previous examples, consumers do not have much agency to determine what identity model they access, even when identity models are conflicting. Depending on situational and contextual factors, some identity characteristics and attitudes become more prominent compared to other identities the consumer holds, inducing responses that are consistent with interpretations of those attributes (Zhang and Khare 2009). In those cases, the dissonance between competing identity constructs might be either glanced over or resolved at the unconscious level (McGregor et al. 1999).

The Cognitivist (Agentic) Perspective

A very different view from the culturalist perspective is presented by the cognitivist (agentic) perspective. According to this view, individuals are intentional (agentic) manipulators of language, meaning and identity. That is, at least meta-cognition is liberated from the constraints of mental

models. Here, mental models act as cognitive schemas or resources, which can be creatively drawn on, combined and intentionally used to communicate unique meaning (see Ringberg and Reihlen 2008). Mental models are applied in non-automatic, proactive, creative ways (Mayseless et al. 2015). For example, Kates (2004) argues that gay groups in San Francisco creatively reconstructed the meaning of the VW Beetle ad for specific community identity purposes. Thompson and Arsel (2004) show how consumers employ anti-Starbucks discourse as an interpretive frame to communicate their support for local coffee shops.

From a related rhetorical perspective, Tracy and Robles (2013, p. 33) state that, “people talk in particular ways in order to accomplish desired identities (or avoid undervalued ones).” The speaker’s creative recombination of available linguistic symbols, texts, tropes, practices, and so on generates new meaning constructs of self and brands. The assumption is that other listeners understand these linguistics symbols, texts, tropes, practices, and so on similarly. By employing the latter resources, people actively construct and reconstruct their identities (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). Consumers also actively construct personal meanings and lifestyle orientations from the symbolic resources provided by an array of brands (Sherry 1998). According to Heshmat (2014), psychologists assume that the identity formation is a matter of finding oneself by matching one’s talents and potential with available social roles. For example, consumers who attend the annual Burning Man festival in the Nevada Desert use discourses that position consumption practices as self-expressive art (Kozinets 2002) based on a desire to distance themselves from the typical market dominant logic, and to shape their identities in unique ways that reduce the sense of dissonance related to being a consumer in the capitalistic market. It is not that individuals do not rely on automated thinking at times, but rather that such automated thinking can be overruled, not by another competing mental model (as is the case for the culturalist position), but by a free-hovering mindset that can evaluate and choose among its existing cognitive resources from a meta-cognitive vantage point.

Introspection and self-reflection allow consumers to understand what mental models are most diagnostic (that is, important or central) to their identity construct, or relevant to rely on in a given situation. From the cognitivist perspective automatic behavior is still plausible, but it is overcome by a meta-cognition that exists independently from the workings of already established neural networks (that is, mental models), from which it freely and intentionally chooses, in creative ways. When a self-reflective consumer understands that an internalized mental model is of essence (that is, diagnostic) to their identity, the consumer will intentionally pay

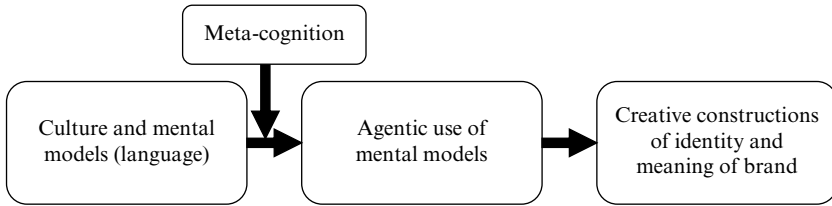


Figure 18.2 Cognitivist perspective

more attention to information and internal feelings related to that mental model (Aaker 2000; Chattaraman et al. 2009; Zhang and Khare 2009) and potentially adjust or change it based on disconfirmatory environmental inputs. Cognitivists would argue that mental models structure aspects of our cognition; otherwise, from what repertoire or resources would the introspective meta-cognition choose? It follows from the cognitivist position that such mental models could be readily reprogrammed and combined by a meta-cognition that is “free” to choose and decide based on opportunistic behavior. In fact, some consumer identity research shows that brand messages that reduce consumers’ perception of agency by explicitly linking brands to desired consumer identities are less sought after (Bhattacharjee et al. 2014). The reason is that these brands run “counter to consumers’ need for agency and self-definition through consumption” (ibid., p. 294).

DISCUSSION

The assumptions of how mental models and thus language influence consumer identity constructions, including the use of brands to achieve an idealized identity, differ fundamentally across the cognitivist and culturalist perspectives. Behavior and identity constructions are quite predictable from a culturalist perspective provided the researcher has knowledge of individuals’ deep-seated mental models; whereas from a cognitivist position, identity constructions are dynamic, opportunistic and self-reflective, and thus ultimately unpredictable.

When seen from a branding perspective, it is essential to understand whether consumers are cultural dopes or critically reflecting individuals; that is, whether mental models govern consumer thought processes or are driven by an unconstrained meta-cognition. This chapter attempts to bring the dichotomy between two positions to the fore, namely the culturalist versus cognitivist assumptions of how individuals use language to create a

sense of self (identity); that is, whether meta-cognition follows a prescribed process (according to an internalized mental model) or follows a creative process stemming from a unique, self-reflective reasoning.

Obviously, the two positions lead to radically different understandings of identity constructions and the use and purpose of language. The fundamental question is whether a “free” meta-cognition governs mental models and, thus, is able to creatively (re)combine the arsenal of mental models into new and creative insights, or whether meta-cognition itself is a mental model whose working is predictable, based on education, upbringing and external feedback inputs. In the culturalist case, the meta-cognitive processing is governed by socio-historically traceable mental models, and thus identifiable through the use of tropes, metaphors and meaning units expressed in language when individuals are asked to account for their meta-cognitive work. In the cognitivist position, the way people meta-cognize vary based on their subjective prioritizing of the usefulness (heuristics) and availability of mental models, given a specific context and a desire for a given outcome. The two contradictory positions lead to some interesting research topics on identity and branding. We have tried to identify some of these:

- If meta-cognition is an agentic property of the mind (i.e., cognitivist position), then it should be more likely that it will lead to more heterogeneous, opportunistic and creative sense-making of self and brand identity.
- If meta-cognition is an agentic property of the mind, then it should take longer to process the intended (that is, symbolic) meaning of a brand as the processing involves cognitive effort, such as choosing, prioritizing and combining available mental models.
- If meta-cognition is an agentic property of the mind, then conflicting mental models should become apparent and resolved at the meta-cognitive level, and lead to either a combination of the two or an elimination of one of the two mental models.
- If meta-cognition represents a learned mental model (i.e., culturalist position), then the process of meta-cognizing should be shared across groups of people, and be socio-historically traceable, similar to other mental models.
- If meta-cognition represents a learned mental model then consumers’ sense-making and choices should follow specific patterns set out by the mental model, and “creative” processes should be predictable.
- If meta-cognition represents a learned mental model, then meta-cognition should vary based on the extent to which it has been internalized. People should be located on a continuum going from

not meta-cognizing to constantly relying on a meta-cognizing mental model that evaluates other mental models.

These contradictory positions have ramifications for brands. If consumers are “agentic,” then they use mental models creatively to construct desired identities through language. In this case, brands would need to open up for and invite consumers to creatively co-construct the brand meaning. However, if consumers are “culturalist,” they will decode the meaning of brand messages in a predictable manner based on their dominant mental model. In this case, brands would want to identify these dominant mental models through in-depth studies among members of a target segment, in order to create a subconsciously meaningful symbolic and emotive resonance.

The above discussion provides insights into how mental models affect language use, identity construction, brand and consumption preferences. It also brings forth the issue of how brand preferences would differ whether consumers are agentic or culturalist processors. For instance, agentic, self-reflective consumers are aware of their identities and, thus, have more options at their disposal when enacting or creating these through language. Therefore, it matters for brands whether identity constructions (meta-cognitive) are governed by a mental model or a free “agentic” will. More generally, researching issues related to agency versus non-agency, use of language, identity creation and branding offer some new interesting avenues for consumer research.

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PART IV

THE IDENTITY CONFLICT PRINCIPLE

19. The role of self-structure in managing identity conflict

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Imagine two consumers, who both have the identity of “mother” in their self-concept, but with decidedly different views of how their mother identity is related to their other identities. One woman – diverse Diane – sees herself as a mother separately from herself as a runner, lawyer, painter and wife. The second woman – unified Eunice – considers herself a runner-mom. While grocery shopping, both women pass an end-of-aisle display for NyQuil, an adult medicine to help people sleep better when they have a cold or flu, with the banner: “Moms Don’t Take Sick Days.” Extant research on identity-driven effects argues that this promotion will influence the women’s purchase behavior based on the relative salience of the mother identity and relevance of NyQuil for that identity. But does it matter how the mother identity is incorporated within the global self-concept for each of these consumers? In other words, even though both consumers have similar content, research has yet to consider whether the organization of identities in the self-concept alters consumer responses to identity marketing. In this chapter, we introduce the self-structure construct to marketing, explain how to assess self-structure, and discuss how self-structure may influence the identity conflict principle.

In almost any discussion of identity, researchers acknowledge that individuals possess a multitude of identities: “the ‘self-concept’ is multidimensional and made up of numerous identities” (Reed et al. 2012, p.312). Indeed, since the very origins of social identity, from Cooley’s (1902) “looking-glass self” to Goffman’s (1959) “self-presentation roles,” theories have explicitly incorporated the multiplicity of selves contained within a single individual. And yet, the majority of empirical research on social identities has taken a singular approach to identity-driven behavior, either examining the global self-concept (Kleine et al. 1993; Sirgy 1982) or isolating a solitary identity within the self-concept (Bhattacharjee et al. 2014; Coleman and Williams 2013; Dommer and Swaminathan 2013; Lee et al. 2014). Nonetheless, within the global self-structure, specific identities can overlap with, interact with, conflict with, enhance and/or complement other identities (Ramarajan 2014).

To our knowledge, no research in marketing has tried to understand the structure of the self – the number of identities a consumer holds and the relationships among them – and how variations in this self-structure can lead to changes in identity-driven behavior. Specifically, rather than emphasizing the content of the self (specific identities), how might the organization of the self (relationships between identities) influence consumer behavior?

SELF-STRUCTURE

There are many ways to conceptualize self-structure. We propose that an initial foray into self-structure should rely on techniques that capture the organization of a network of concepts. Traditional approaches to network measurement rely upon the number of nodes and the distances between nodes. For instance, brand concept maps have been used to graphically represent the meanings, associations and attitudes toward brands (John et al. 2006). In these graphical representations, the structure of the brand meaning is interpreted through both the number of associations and the connections between them. In psychology, structural representations of semantic memory networks have been used to understand how behaviors and beliefs are organized within social categories (Visser and Mirabile 2004), how memories and emotions are recalled (Bower 1981), and how new knowledge is encoded into existing structures (Steyvers and Tenenbaum 2005). These approaches also use nodes and relational ties (Reagans and McEvily 2003) to quantify and represent the overall memory structure. Based on this network research, we propose that measuring the organization of the self should include some assessment of the number of identities held, as well as the degree to which those identities are unified or distinct from each other. In all of these examples, as well as in our assessment of self-structure, a network structure is reduced to a measure of dispersion – derived from the number of concepts and the interrelations among them – which assesses the degree to which the network is diverse rather than unified.

Regarding the self-concept, then, the knowledge structure representing the self (Kleine et al. 1993; Reed et al. 2012) can be captured through the number of identities contained within the self-structure, and how closely related (overlapping) or distant (distinct) the identity-linked concepts are from each other. Considering the structure of the self, Campbell et al. (2000) propose structural features, consistent with the nodes and relational ties used in the network structure literature, to assess self-structure dispersion. Specifically, Campbell et al. (2000) suggest that self-structure

is comprised of the number of self-labels and/or identities an individual spontaneously uses in thinking about the self and the relationships among these identities, assessing how distinctive each identity is from all of the others. Thus, self-structure can be characterized by the degree of dispersion within the self-concept, derived from the number of identities and their differentiation.

According to Campbell et al. (2000), diverse self-structures, high in dispersion, are characterized by many identities with structural independence from one another, indicating that the self is multifaceted, constantly changing, and unique across identities, contexts and situations. However, a unified self-structure, low in dispersion, consists of few identities with little structural independence, creating an amorphous whole with little differentiation (Campbell et al. 2000). In this case, the self can be viewed as a simple combination of a few identities or, in the extreme case, as if the self consists of a single identity (for example, Chinese American, Benet-Martínez et al. 2002; Asian American, Roccas and Brewer 2002; student-athlete, Settles et al. 2002). Thus, the structure of the self varies in dispersion, ranging from a unified self-concept of few integrated identities to a diverse self-concept of many distinct identities. Of course, these are the extreme ends of self-structure (see Figure 19.1). Many consumers are likely to have self-structures that fall in the middle of this continuum as they will hold slightly more or less identities in their self-concept, for which each identity will likely have some degree of distinction from other held identities.

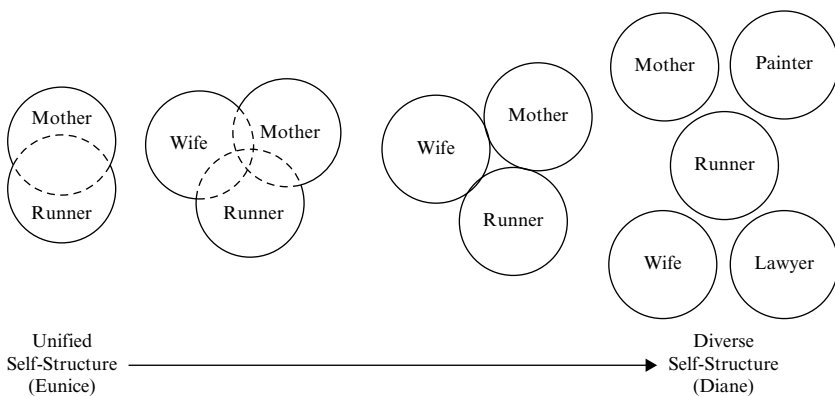


Figure 19.1 Dispersion within self-structure

MEASURING SELF-STRUCTURE

If self-structure reflects the dispersion of the contents of the self, which is derived from the number of identities and the common identity-linked associations (or lack thereof), any measure of self-structure needs to incorporate both of these elements. One measure of self-structure which does this is self-complexity (Campbell et al. 2000; Gramzow et al. 2000; Linville 1985). The self-complexity metric uses an index of dispersion derived from information theory based on the H statistic (Attneave 1959; Scott 1969), which increases as self-knowledge becomes spread across a greater number of identities that are increasingly independent of one another (Linville 1985, 1987). To obtain the nodes and interrelationships for this measure of dispersion, participants sort traits into groups, with each group representing an identity. The measure then assesses self-structure dispersion by capturing the extent to which traits are shared across groups (fewer shared traits means fewer shared associations, and thus greater structural independence among identities) and accounting for the number of trait-groups (that is, identities) for which the degree of sharing occurs. Individuals with higher self-complexity scores possess many identities with more unique traits for each held identity (few shared associations among many identities), characteristic of a more disperse self-structure. Those with lower self-complexity scores are individuals who hold fewer identities with more shared traits (more ties among a small number of identities; Linville 1985, 1987), indicative of a less disperse self-structure. In other words, dispersion increases when the self-concept is characterized by a greater number of identities as well as greater independence among identities.

THE DISTINCTION OF SELF-STRUCTURE FROM RELATED SELF-CONSTRUCTS

While we have chosen to use self-complexity as the measure of self-structure, there are other measures that relate to elements of the self-knowledge network. However, as articulated next, these elements are distinct from self-structure as they do not explicitly capture the organization of the self-concept. One of the most commonly studied constructs, particularly in marketing, regarding the self is self-construal, which refers to an individual's sense of self in relation to others: the perception of oneself as being separate from or interconnected with others (Singelis 1994). While self-construal is about the incorporation of others into the self, self-structure does not capture the relationships with others. Instead, self-structure is about the relationships among one's own held identities.

Consistent with this distinction, work on multiple identities contends that even in independent cultures the self is far from unitary and consistent (McConnell 2011). Another important construct pertaining to the self is the compartmentalization of the self, which refers to the extent to which positive and negative self-beliefs reside in separate, uniformly valenced self-aspects or identities (Showers 1992). Though compartmentalization (or evaluative integration) does consider the mental organization of positive and negative self-aspects among one's held identities, assessing the balance of valence of the self-aspects is independent of the broader organization of the self reflected in self-structure. That is, self-structure is not concerned with the degree to which identities in the self-concept contain positive or negative valence. Relatedly, Campbell et al. (1996) introduced the concept of self-concept clarity, which refers to the extent to which the contents of one's self-concept are clearly defined, internally consistent and temporally stable. Self-concept clarity has little to do with how the self is actually structured, but rather whether an individual has a clear sense of their self-structure. Thus, an individual may have a more or less dispersed self-structure, regardless of how well they can articulate each role, which is captured by self-concept clarity (Koch and Shepperd 2004).

Three additional constructs may seem particularly relevant to self-structure, but are distinct. Identity integration (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005) considers how multiple identities complement one another, but complementariness does not equate to the dispersion among all identities. For instance, a mother could see that her goals as a mother match her goals as a health enthusiast, yet she could still see her mother and health enthusiast self as two distinct identities which share few traits. Moreover, the integration of two or more identities does not capture the overall structure of the self based on the degree of shared traits among all held identities. Causal centrality (see Chen, Chapter 20 in this volume) considers the direction of relationships between identities and their associations; identities which are causally central are more defining and important. While this construct does capture a specific component of the self-structure (that is, causal direction of relationships between identities), it does not consider the number of identities nor the amount of shared associations. Perhaps the closest construct to our proposed self-structure is self-concept differentiation, which is the tendency to see oneself as having different personality characteristics across one's identities (Donahue et al. 1993). While self-concept differentiation does indeed relate to how one views one's roles to be distinct, it focuses on the presumably negative aspect of wearing "multiple masks" for different roles rather than the degree to which one individual may specialize across multiple identities, which is the role of self-structure. Thus, while a fair amount of research has begun to

consider elements of the self and corresponding self-knowledge beyond singular identities, self-structure seems to offer the most holistic approach to capture the organization of the contents of the self because it accounts for all held identities and the degree to which these identities are dispersed in the self-concept.

IDENTITY CONFLICT AND SELF-STRUCTURE

With this understanding of self-structure, we next consider how the organization of identities within the self may impact the identity conflict principle. Given that individuals possess multiple identities, each with its own set of traits, values, behaviors and emotions, there may be times that multiple identities within the same individual come into conflict. The identity conflict principle states that individuals are motivated to reduce conflict across identities, and would do so via managing the salience of the conflicting identities (Reed et al. 2012).

Research on the conflict between identities has generally been constrained to two identities and whether these two identities are in harmony or opposition. This work is most common in cross-cultural research, focusing on understanding how bicultural individuals maintain harmony between their two cultural identities. For example, Benet-Martínez et al. (2002) examine how individuals who hold multiple cultural identities (for example, Chinese and American) respond to cultural cues. In other research, LeBoeuf et al. (2010) find post-choice satisfaction decreases when the identity salient at the time of choice differs from the salient identity at the time of consumption. To be sure, other research examines the interplay of two specific identities on consumption decisions: gender and moral identities in Winterich et al. (2009), political and moral identities in Winterich et al. (2012). While this research acknowledges and examines how multiple identities impact a given consumer response, what is still missing is an examination of how the organization of the contents of the self-concept impacts identity conflict.

As consumers with a unified self-structure have more integrated identities, it appears less likely they will experience conflict among their identities. Research has shown that conflict is minimized when the characteristics of identities are similar to each other (Benet-Martínez et al. 2002), which is consistent with a more unified self-structure. On the other hand, for consumers with a diverse self-structure, the characteristics of each identity are less consistent, implying a greater potential for inter-identity conflict. This type of conflict could occur in many situations. One instantiation of such conflict could be when consumers are choosing between two identity

goods. Generally speaking, the identity literature has focused on choice sets that contain one identity good and one identity-neutral (or identity-irrelevant) good (Bhattacharjee et al. 2014; Chan et al. 2012; Coleman and Williams 2013; Dommer and Swaminathan 2013; Reed 2004). Based on self-structure, we speculate that individuals with diverse self-structures will find both identity goods highly attractive, and thus will experience greater difficulty choosing between the two identity goods.

To test this effect of self-structure and identity conflict, we asked participants ($n = 201$, 58 percent female, $M_{\text{age}} = 36.76$) to imagine choosing either between two identity mugs ('I ♥ USA' versus 'I ♥ Being Manly/Girly') or between an identity mug (either the American or the gender identity mug) and a plain (blank) mug. We measured the time they took to make their decision, and their self-structure, using Linville's (1987) measure of self-complexity. We expected diverse individuals, but not unified individuals, to take longer to make a choice when the choice set contained two identity goods compared to when only one identity good was present in the choice set; evidence of identity conflict.

We ran an ANCOVA with choice set condition (two identity options versus one identity option) and self-structure dispersion in a full-factorial model predicting the log-transformation of decision time. The predicted interaction of self-structure dispersion with choice set was significant ($F(1, 197) = 4.58, p = 0.034$). Consistent with an experience of identity conflict, diverse (+1.5 SD) participants took more time to make their choice when there were two identity options compared to when there was only one identity option available ($b = 0.26, t(197) = 2.12, p = 0.035$). There was no effect of choice set among participants with unified self-structures (−1.5 SD: $b = -0.15, t(197) = -1.42, p = 0.16$; see Figure 19.2). Furthermore, the effect of self-structure dispersion was significant and positive in the two identity options condition ($b = 0.21, t(197) = 2.61, p = 0.0097$), but not when there was only one identity option in the set ($b = 0.0071, t(197) = 0.14, p = 0.89$). This study demonstrates that individuals with a diverse self-structure experience greater conflict when choosing between two identity-relevant goods, as the choice is representative of choosing between two separate selves. On the other hand, individuals with a unified self-structure have more shared associations between their identities, and thus choosing between two identity goods is less conflicting.

Beyond the conflict that could arise from choosing between two identity-relevant goods, identities may clash when their underlying traits, values, attitudes or emotions are inconsistent. There are a variety of methods that a consumer could use to manage this conflict and return the overall structure to harmony. Reed and Forehand (2016) discuss three fundamental processes – elevation, expulsion and suppression – that are

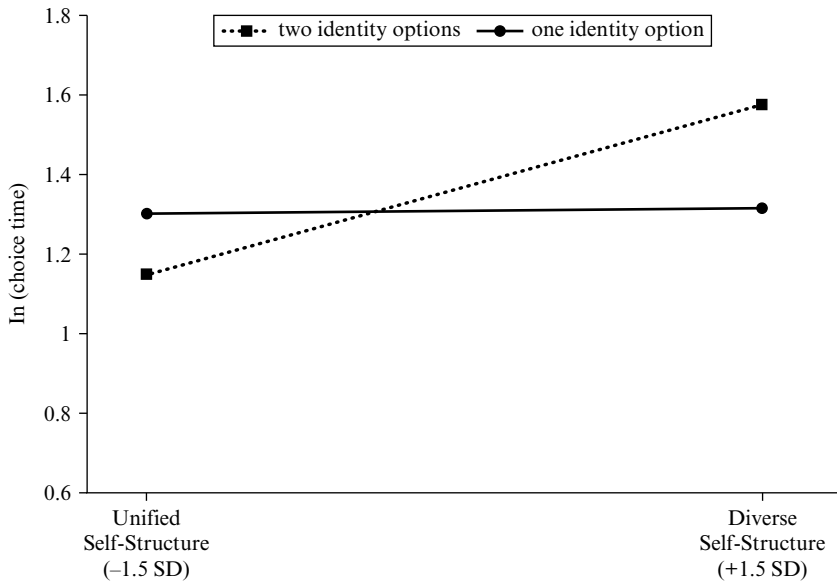


Figure 19.2 Identity conflict based in self-structure dispersion when choosing between identity goods

used in identity maintenance, and which are relevant for managing the conflict among multiple identities. Elevation is marked by increasing the prominence of a particular identity within its overall structure, while suppression is the process of reducing the prominence of an identity within the self-structure, and expulsion is the mechanism of purging an identity from the self. Based on the above theory of self-structure, we would expect there to be differences in the utility of these maintenance processes for individuals with varying degrees of dispersion. An individual with a more unified self-structure would find these processes relatively difficult to employ, as they each require the separation of one identity from others: increasing its sole importance, or decreasing it, or disentangling it altogether from the self. Individuals with a unified self-structure experience a high degree of overlap between their (few) identities, and thus any action taken upon one identity would likely impact its related others. Evidence of this linkage has been documented in the affect spillover literature (Koch and Shepperd 2004; Linville 1987; McConnell et al. 2009; McConnell et al. 2005): affect experienced in one identity is more likely to carry over and impact other identities. For instance, when Eunice does not run her personal best in a race, her disappointment is likely to spill over and make her feel as though she is also not living up to her potential as a mother. Among individuals

with greater dispersion, however, thoughts and feelings evoked by one event are likely to be confined to the relevant identity, influencing fewer identities overall. Due to the boundaries between identities, individuals with a more dispersed self-structure can buffer themselves from negative affect stemming from one particular identity. Thus, Diane would not see her poor race performance as relevant to her feelings toward her self as a mother, lawyer or painter.

While the ability to use elevation, suppression or expulsion may be limited among consumers with a unified self-structure, we would expect individuals with a diverse self-structure to be relatively adept at these processes. Research has shown that suppression is more likely when the inhibited constructs are dissimilar (Anderson and Spellman 1995); individuals with a diverse self-structure see their identities as more unique, and thus should suppress conflicting identities more readily. Furthermore, elevation should also be more facile for individuals with greater self-structure dispersion. To the degree that elevation relies upon unique activation of the focal identity, research on memory has shown that activation of a solitary node decreases as the number of shared connections increases, as activation is a limited resource that gets spread across related concepts (Anderson 1974). Thus, an individual with many separate identities should be better able to increase the prominence of one identity (and not others) than an individual with few overlapping identities that would share the connections and thus activation. Finally, expulsion, or the excising of an identity from the self, would presumably be easier for individuals with a diverse self-structure than those with a more unified self. Removing an identity from a self-structure that is comprised of few identities with many overlapping associations would be much more difficult: how do you maintain the integrity of the remaining identities? If the overlap is so high that the two identities are seen as one, does the removal of one fundamentally change the meaning of the other? In contrast, dropping an identity from a dispersed self-structure should be simpler: each identity is only tenuously connected to others; in the extreme, it may even exist in isolation, and has no implications for other aspects of the self. Returning to Eunice and Diane, if both get injured and cannot run, Eunice might feel that her entire self has changed as she is no longer a "runner-mom," while Diane would continue enacting her other selves generally unchanged (mother, lawyer, painter, wife).

Beyond using identity maintenance processes to cope with identity conflict, these processes would also be relevant for managing responses to identity threats. Consumers are motivated to accurately represent their identities to themselves and to others; this verification is particularly important when the individual has received negative feedback regarding

their identity enactment (Swann 1983). We propose that following an identity threat, individuals with a diverse self-structure will have less favorable evaluations of products related to the threatened identity (that is, disassociation), whereas individuals with a unified self-structure will have more favorable evaluations of products relevant to the threatened identity (that is, association) because they need to verify this identity which is integrated with other held identities. This prediction is supported by research showing the relationship between self-structure and affect spillover (Koch and Shepperd 2004; Linville 1987; McConnell et al. 2009; McConnell et al. 2005). If Eunice has had her mother identity threatened, she will be more likely to choose NyQuil to verify this threatened identity, along with other identities integrated with her mother identity; whereas Diane may avoid NyQuil when her mother identity is threatened, and choose to purchase a product which verifies another identity relationally independent of her mother identity.

As the above illustrates, the ability to use different identity maintenance processes should depend integrally on the organization of the self, not just its contents. It appears that the malleability of the self (Aaker 1999) may be quite low for individuals with a unified self-structure, and thus their ability to maintain a harmonious and coherent self in the face of conflict may be constrained. This then begs the question of whether these individuals turn to external methods of conflict resolution, such as compensatory consumption behaviors (Mandel et al. 2017; Rucker and Cannon, Chapter 12 in this volume), or whether other internal identity processes may exist.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have introduced the concept of self-structure – the organization of identities within the self-concept – and proposed that the structure of the self, separate from the contents of the self, can impact consumer responses to identity conflict. Self-structure is beliefs about how the content of the self is organized, the interrelations among self-attributes, and the network of self-knowledge. We leverage work on both self-structure and other network theories to support dispersion as a metric of structural variation. Dispersion in the self-structure refers to how spread-out and multifaceted versus clustered and amorphous the global self is; a more dispersed (that is, diverse) self-structure is one with many independent self-aspects, whereas one with less dispersion (that is, unified) has fewer, interrelated aspects. Using self-structure dispersion, we propose how the organization of consumers' global self-concept affects responses

to identity conflict, and consumers' ability to use different identity maintenance processes to manage conflict. Ultimately, capturing the organization of consumers' self-concepts has important implications for marketing beyond those based on the contents of the self.

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20. Causal beliefs in the self-concept and identity-based consumption

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INTRODUCTION

The theme of this section is the identity conflict principle: people must manage and are motivated to reduce the conflict between the various identities that they possess. This principle is based on the assumption that people hold multiple identities – that is, self-associate with multiple social category labels – that have potentially conflicting norms (Reed II et al. 2012). In contrast to this assumption, much work on identity-based consumption and choice has examined a single identity at a time. So, a key challenge for identity researchers is to understand how the various parts of the self-concept come together and relate to identity-based behavior (Reed II and Forehand 2016). The need to examine identity-based consumption within the context of the broader self-concept is also highlighted by theoretical accounts of the self-concept. These theoretical accounts tend to characterize the self-concept as multifaceted, made up of many different aspects or features of the self, including identities but also individual-level characteristics (for example, memories, moral qualities, personality traits, preferences and desires) (Bartels and Rips 2010; Bartels and Urminsky 2011, 2015; Chen et al. 2016; Ersner-Hershfield et al. 2009; Markus and Wurf 1987; Parfit 1984; Strohminger and Nichols 2014).

This chapter aims to understand identity-based consumption with a more complex view of the self-concept. There are two main goals of this chapter. The first is to examine how people organize information about, or mentally represent, the various parts of their self-concepts. That is, what information determines what we think makes us who we are as individuals? The second goal is to use this new understanding of the self-concept, one that places any given identity into the broader self-concept with individual-level aspects as well as other identities, to gain a better understanding of identity-based consumer behaviors. Throughout the chapter I use the term “identity” to refer to any category label that people incorporate into their sense of self (Reed II et al. 2012), and the term “self-concept” to refer the set of beliefs that people have about what makes them who they are as individuals, including but (as I will argue) not limited to beliefs about what

identities and individual-level aspects they have. I use the terms “feature” and “aspect” interchangeably to refer to any property of the self-concept, including identities as well as individual-level characteristics.

In the following sections, I first review a recent theoretical approach to how people mentally represent the self-concept, the “causal centrality approach” (Chen et al. 2016), and discuss how this approach differs from past work on the self-concept. The causal centrality approach, inspired by work in cognitive psychology on conceptual representation, suggests that any given aspect of the self-concept is defining of an individual to the extent that they believe that it is causally central: causally related to many other aspects of the self-concept, including identities and individual-level traits (for example, memories, moral qualities, personality traits). I then explore the implications of the causal centrality approach for identity-consistent behaviors. As the causal centrality account suggests that identities that are seen as causally central are perceived as more defining or important, it predicts that people for whom a given identity is more causally central will be more likely to act in ways consistent with the norms of that social category (as compared with those who believe that the same identity is more causally peripheral). Finally, I review evidence that supports this account of identity-based behavior. By using a theoretical model of self-concept representation to predict differences in identity-based behaviors, this chapter highlights how understanding the internal representation of the self-concept provides a deeper and more nuanced understanding of identity-based consumer behavior.

HOW DO WE THINK ABOUT THE SELF-CONCEPT?

In this section, I focus on two related questions. First, what information is in the self-concept? Second, how does this information guide what people think define their self-concepts? In other words, what do people think makes them who they are as individuals? These questions have been studied by researchers from a number of academic disciplines and have yielded somewhat different answers. Regarding the first question, in general, the self-concept has been characterized by various approaches as consisting of a set of aspects of the self. Where these approaches differ is on the types of features that they emphasize as making up the self-concept. Broadly speaking, approaches differ in whether they focus on identities (for example, gender, profession, ethnicity, brand-loyalist, and so on) or on the individual-level traits that a person has (for example, autobiographical memories, personality traits, moral qualities, preferences and desires, and so on). More theoretical approaches to how people think about the

self-concept from philosophy and cognitive psychology tend to emphasize individual-level aspects that are not necessarily strongly associated with identities such as autobiographical memories and moral qualities (e.g., Blok et al. 2005; Nichols and Bruno 2010; Parfit 1984; Strohming and Nichols 2014, 2015). In contrast, approaches to identity-based consumption and choice from marketing, economics and social psychology tend to emphasize identities (e.g., Akerlof and Kranton 2000, 2010; Oyserman et al. 2007) that can each have clusters of associations that can include things such as attitudinal and behavioral norms, and emotion profiles (Reed II et al. 2012).

The answers to the second question – what do people think defines the self-concept? – diverge even more. Work on identity-based consumption and choice has seemingly put social categories at the center of the self-concept. This literature has generally focused upon identities (and their associations) as the drivers of behaviors, finding that people who share a given identity tend to be more likely to act in ways consistent with the norms of the group – that is, display identity-consistent behaviors – than those who do not belong to the group (e.g., Akerlof and Kranton 2000, 2010; Benjamin et al. 2010; Brough et al. 2016; Cohn et al. 2014; LeBoeuf et al. 2010; Forehand et al. 2002; Puntoni et al. 2011; Oyserman et al. 2007; Shang et al. 2008; Reed II 2004). Among the approaches that focus on individual-level features, it is debated which type of feature is most defining of the self-concept. Philosophers have long suggested that autobiographical memories are key to defining an individual, and psychological studies have provided empirical data suggesting that disrupting a person's memories leads to perceptions that the person has become a different individual (Blok et al. 2005; Nichols and Bruno 2010). Other accounts have suggested that personality traits are particularly important in defining who a person is (Haslam et al. 2004). More recent research has instead suggested that moral qualities define one's self-concept (Strohming and Nichols 2014, 2015).

Although the above approaches to the self-concept differ in which types of features they focus on, they all suggest that the self-concept is some set of aspects that one associates with the self: one's identities, autobiographical memories, moral qualities, personality traits, and so on. And answering the question of what people perceive as defining of who they are as individuals is a matter of figuring out which feature type (memories versus moral qualities versus identities, and so on) people generally perceive as most defining of who they are as individuals.

The Causal Centrality Approach to the Self-Concept

The features emphasized in the approaches to the self-concept described in the previous subsection are clearly important to the self-concept. They

are the types of things one would use to describe oneself (or another person); for example, I am a bookish academic who loved science camp as a child. The causal centrality approach to the self-concept (Chen et al. 2016), however, suggests that there is more to the self-concept than a list of features. More specifically, that the self-concept includes not only features but also beliefs about the causal relationships between these features. For example, people not only know their identities (for example, academic) and their personality traits (for example, bookish) and their autobiographical memories (for example, loving science camp), but they also have beliefs about how these features are causally related to one another (for example, I became an academic because I loved science camp and am bookish). While the causal centrality approach focuses on knowledge of the relationships that exist between the features within the self-concept, other complementary approaches to the self-concept and identity-based consumption focus on the relationship between the self and items (including identities) situated within our broader social knowledge (see Connors and Perkins, Chapter 7 in this volume).

It is worth noting that the causal centrality approach (Chen et al. 2016) is about people's subjective beliefs about causal relationships, not what the true state of the world is (for example, maybe I would have become an academic whether or not I went to science camp). In most cases, it seems unlikely that one would be able to figure out what the true state of the world really is (for example, I do not know what would have happened if I had not gone to science camp but everything else had remained the same). So, it is these subjective beliefs that are included in the self-concept. And later in the chapter, I will discuss how these subjective beliefs relate to people's behaviors.

Building on the study of concepts in cognitive psychology, the main proposal of the causal centrality approach to the self-concept (Chen et al. 2016) is that causal beliefs about the relationships between features guide what people perceive as defining of the self-concept. A seminal finding from research on concepts is that features are perceived as defining a concept to the extent that the features are seen as causally central (Ahn et al. 2000; Rehder and Hastie 2001; Sloman et al. 1998). In this chapter, I define causal centrality as the total number of other features of the self-concept a given feature is seen as causally linked to, as either a cause or an effect (Rehder and Hastie, 2001). I use this definition in all the studies described in the chapter as Chen et al. (2016) found that it described participants' judgments of the self-concept better than an alternative form of causal centrality (Ahn et al. 2000; Sloman et al. 1998) which suggests that only being the cause of other features (and not being an effect of other features) contributes to a feature's causal centrality. However, the issue of how to

best operationalize causal centrality is still a topic of debate (Chen and Urminsky 2019; Rehder and Kim 2010; Hayes and Rehder 2012) that is beyond the scope of this chapter.

Beliefs about causal relationships appear to be particularly important in our representation of concepts relative to simple associations. People are significantly more likely to recall that features are correlated if they can describe a causal relationship between them than when there is no clear causal relationship. For example, people readily seem to recognize (or represent) the correlation between clothing being made out of wool and being warm; a pair of features where there is a clear causal relationship (being made out of wool makes clothes warm). In contrast, people do not readily recognize that clothing with buttons tends to have long sleeves; a pair where there is not a clear causal relationship (Ahn et al. 2002; Malt and Smith 1984). This is consistent with theory-based views of concepts (Murphy and Medin 1985; Murphy 2002) which suggest that we have lay theories about why features go together. Since simple (non-causal) associations only encode co-occurrence, they do not provide any explanation for why features go together as causal relationships do and, theoretically, do not hold the same privileged status in conceptual representation.

While ideas about causal beliefs have been very influential in the study of concepts in cognitive psychology, they have tended to be studied in everyday concepts (for example, animal categories) or artificial concepts (novel concepts that experimenters designed and taught to participants). Exploring these ideas in the self-concept brings these ideas to a very different type of concept, a highly individualized one that people have rich knowledge about.

The causal centrality approach to the self-concept suggests that causal beliefs about how features are related are an integral part of the self-concept that guides judgments about how important features are. That is, how defining a feature is of the self-concept depends on the total number of causal relationships it has with other features. To illustrate, imagine two Democrats who are academics, Marissa and Nicole. Marissa believes that her moral qualities caused her to become a Democrat and also caused her to choose her profession as an academic. Nicole instead believes that it is being a Democrat that has caused the development of her moral qualities and also caused her to choose her profession. As a result, even if Marissa and Nicole's profession, moral qualities and political affiliation are identical, their self-concepts will be fundamentally different. Moral qualities will be more causally central to Marissa's self-concept than to Nicole's, because Marissa believes that her morals are causally connected to other features (both her profession and political affiliation), while Nicole believes that her morals are causally connected to fewer features (only to her political

affiliation). In contrast, Nicole's political affiliation will be relatively more causally central, because she believes that it is causally connected to more other features (both her profession and moral qualities), while Marissa believes that her political affiliation is causally connected to few other features (only her moral qualities). As a result, Nicole would perceive her identity as a Democrat as more defining of her self-concept than Marissa would.

Unlike previous approaches to the self-concept, the causal centrality view does not assume that there is a feature type that is most defining: any feature type can be seen as defining if it is causally central enough. By focusing on beliefs about the causal relationships between the features of the self-concept, this account may help to reconcile some of the debate about which type of feature is most defining of the self-concept (is it memories or moral qualities or identities?). Causally central identities like being a Democrat or an Apple user may be seen as defining of the self-concept, but so can causally central individual-level traits like being responsible or a memory of a traumatic event. Further, the causal centrality account of the self-concept can explain both why some feature types might, on average, be perceived as more defining (that is, because they are seen as causally central by more people), and also why a given feature may matter more to some people than others (that is, because of differences in subjective beliefs about the causal relationships that the feature is involved in like the differences between Marissa and Nicole's beliefs).

Evidence for the Causal Centrality Approach to the Self-Concept

A good place to start to examine the causal centrality account of the self-concept is to ask: are the features that people believe are more causally connected to other features seen as more defining of their self-concepts? That is, do people think that changing causally central features makes them into more of a different individual than changing causally peripheral ones? To explore this question, Chen et al. (2016, experiment 1) selected a set of 16 features from feature types suggested to be important in previous research (memories, moral qualities, personality traits, preferences/desires; Strohminger and Nichols 2014). Participants reported two things about each feature (in counterbalanced order). For each of the 16 features, they reported which of the other 15 features they thought the feature caused or shaped; for example, a participant could have reported that they thought their intelligence level shaped what their favorite activities are. Participants also reported how defining each feature was to their self-concept, by stating to what extent changing each feature would make them feel like a different person. The rationale being that if a feature is perceived as defining

who a person is as an individual, changing the feature would change who the person is (for example, “If my morals changed, I would not be me anymore”) to a greater extent than changing a less defining feature (for example, “If I wasn’t an Apple user anymore, I would still be me”).

Chen et al. (2016) found that participants did indeed perceive causally central features as more defining of their self-concepts than causally peripheral ones. Regardless of whether participants reported causal relationships before or after reporting how defining features were of the self-concept, there was a positive correlation between the number of causal relationships that a feature was involved in and how disruptive to the self-concept a change to that feature was expected to be. In fact, most participants (>75 percent) displayed this pattern. These results were replicated with an alternative method for measuring causal centrality, adapted from Sloman et al.’s (1998) concept map task, in which participants were shown a visual display of the 16 features and drew the causal links (drew arrows between the features that they thought were causally connected). Further, the same results were found when participants were asked about the relationships between the features of other people, suggesting that, much like the self-concept, people see a feature as defining of another person to the extent that the feature is seen as causally central.

One might wonder whether the results had something to do with the specific features chosen for the experiment described above. However, the same results were obtained when participants generated their own features, such that they each had a unique set of the most important features from each of the five categories used in experiment 1 (Chen et al. 2016, experiment 2). The same results were also obtained when participants generated features of another person who they knew well (Chen et al. 2016, experiment 2). These results suggest that the correlation between a feature’s causal centrality and perceptions of how defining it is to the self-concept (and concepts of others) generalize to a wide range of features.

The results described above demonstrate that features that are seen as causally central are indeed perceived as more defining of the self-concept. A perhaps more interesting question is whether the same feature can be made more or less defining by simply changing its causal relationships; that is, by making it more or less causally central. For example, does making a person’s identity as an Apple user more or less causally connected to other features of their self-concept make other people see the identity as more or less defining of who they are as an individual? This is an important question, because the feature-based accounts of the self-concept discussed earlier suggest that it is a feature’s type (moral quality, memory, identity, and so on) that determines how defining the feature is. However, if the exact same feature can be made more or less defining by simply changing

its causal connections with other features, there has to be more to how defining a feature is than feature type: namely, its causal relationships. To isolate the effect that causal centrality has on how defining a feature is, Chen et al. (2016) examined whether the exact same feature could be made more or less defining by manipulating the causal centrality of a given feature of hypothetical people's self-concepts. Across many feature types, the results revealed that the manipulation of a feature's causal centrality did indeed influence participants' perceptions of how defining the feature was. That is, participants believe that changes to a feature made the hypothetical person seem like more of a different person when it was described as causally central than when the exact same feature was described as causally peripheral (Chen et al. 2016; Experiment 3 and Supplemental Experiment 4, Appendix A1).

The studies described in this section demonstrate that causal beliefs are a critical part of the self-concept that guide judgments about what is defining of who a person is as an individual. People saw causally central features as more defining of their own self-concepts as well as of their concepts of other people than more causally peripheral features. Further, the exact same feature could be made more defining by changing its causal relationships with other features, a result that is not predicted by previous approaches to the self-concept that emphasize feature type as a determinant of how defining features are.

While I have focused on aspects that are already considered part of the self-concept, the causal centrality approach has implications for how features become incorporated into one's self-concept. As noted in the introduction to this chapter, a social category only becomes an identity once a consumer has "begun to incorporate it into his or her sense of who he or she is" (Reed II et al. 2012, p.312). That is, one can believe that one belongs to a social category without seeing it as an identity (for example, I may technically be an Apple user, but that is not really part of my sense of self). The causal centrality approach suggests that part of incorporating a category label into one's sense of self may include seeing it as causally connected to other aspects of the self-concept (for example, I am an Apple user because of my aesthetic preferences and my profession).

As these causal beliefs are subjective, people's beliefs about the relationships any given feature has can vary a great deal, as in the earlier example of Marissa and Nicole, the two Democrat academics. Although Marissa and Nicole shared the same features, they differed in how causally central they thought their Democrat identity was and, as a result, in how defining this identity was to their self-concepts. In the next section, I will use this variation in beliefs about the causal centrality of identities to predict differences in identity-consistent behaviors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR IDENTITY-BASED CONSUMER BEHAVIORS

In this section, I explore the implications of the causal centrality account of the self-concept for identity-based choice. More specifically, as causally central features of the self-concept are perceived as more defining of one's self-concept, the causal centrality approach predicts that those who see a given identity as more causally central will be more likely to display identity-consistent behaviors than those who see the same identity as relatively more peripheral. This prediction is consistent with both theoretical accounts that suggest that aspects of the self-concept that are more important or central will be more likely to influence behavior (Markus and Wurf 1987), and research that finds that identity importance moderates the effect of identity salience (LeBoeuf et al. 2010; Reed II 2004).

Using the causal centrality approach to understand identity-based behaviors provides a new perspective on why people who share an identity may vary in how likely they are to demonstrate identity-consistent behaviors. As research on identity has often explored how environment influences identity-consistent behaviors, variance in likelihood to act in identity-consistent ways across individuals can often be attributed to differences in their environments, and in particular, to differences in how salient a given identity is (e.g., Brough et al. 2016; Cohn et al. 2014; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand et al. 2002; Kleine et al. 1993; LeBoeuf et al. 2010; Puntoni et al. 2011; Reed II 2004). So, a key challenge for identity researchers is to explain variance in identity-consistent behaviors among people who share both an identity and a situation. For example, self-ascribed Democrats do not all vote for the Democratic candidate (an identity-consistent behavior) even when they live in the same town, go to the same polling place, and are exposed to an election that makes their political identity very salient. Thus, explaining these differences in identity-consistent behavior requires a focus on internal beliefs about identity rather than on environmental factors. The causal centrality approach provides an understanding of these internal beliefs that makes predictions about who is more or less likely to display identity-consistent behaviors in the same situation; predictions that approaches to identity-based behaviors which focus on environmental factors are unable to make.

Oleg Urminsky and I have run a series of studies that test the prediction that people who perceive an identity as more causally central are more likely to engage in identity-consistent behaviors than those who see the same identity as more causally peripheral (controlling for the overall number of causal links they see within the self-concepts). In this work, we examined people who self-ascribe to the same identity (for example, political party)

that has norms for behavior (for example, voting for the party's candidate). In all the studies presented below, participants reported the causal relationships that exist between the features of their self-concept, including the identity of interest, in a similar manner to the studies described in the previous section. Participants also reported on a behavior associated with the norms of the identity. To focus on internal representations rather than the salience of an identity in the environment, these studies were executed at times when membership in the identity was very salient to everyone (for example, the 2016 United States presidential election).

Causal Centrality of Political Identity and Political Behavior

Chen and Urminsky (2019) explored whether the causal centrality of identities with norms for political behavior predicted the likelihood of demonstrating behavior consistent with those norms. In one study, participants who identified with one of the major United States (US) political parties (Democratic and Republican) reported the causal relationships between the features of their self-concept, including political party, the day before the 2016 US presidential election. The day after the election, participants reported whether or not they had voted for their party's candidate; that is, whether or not they had performed an identity-consistent behavior. Consistent with the predictions of the causal centrality approach, participants who saw their political identity as more causally central were significantly more likely to vote for their party's candidate than those who saw this identity as causally peripheral. Further analysis suggests that the relationship between causal centrality of political identity and voting does not simply reflect stronger preferences for a party's candidate among people who see their political party as causally central. The relationship between causal centrality and political party remained even when controlling for satisfaction with the candidate. This result suggests that even among people who personally may not agree with their party's choice of candidate, if their political identity is causally central enough, they may still behave in line with the norms of the group. As the conflict principle suggests that people are motivated to reduce conflict between identities via self-regulatory strategies (for example, managing the salience of conflicting identities; Reed II et al. 2012), it may be that similar strategies are used in the case where personal preferences conflict with identity norms (such as the case of people who did not agree with their party's choice of candidate).

While political identity is an obvious identity to examine when exploring political behaviors, the causal centrality theory suggests that any identity with an associated norm may be predictive of political behavior.

In two studies, Chen and Urminsky (2019) examined another identity with norms for political behavior: national identity and support for the United Kingdom leaving the European Union (Brexit). Our study confirmed that the British and English identities were more associated with support for Brexit than other national identities in the United Kingdom (Welsh, Irish, Scottish, European). More importantly, among people who self-identified as British or English, those who saw their national identity as more causally central were more likely to have voted in favor of Brexit in the United Kingdom European Union membership referendum in 2016 (the “Brexit referendum”) than those who saw their national identity as more peripheral.

Causal Centrality and Identity Importance

Why might people who view a given identity as more causally central be more likely to act in identity-consistent ways than those who see the same identity as causally peripheral? As discussed earlier, previous work on the self-concept and identity-based consumption suggests that the importance of an identity is a moderator of how behavior relates to identity (Markus and Wurf 1987; Reed II 2004; Reed II et al. 2012). Reed II (2004) found that people who rate an identity as more important react more favorably to products geared towards that identity. Furthermore, the strength of identification with the social group has been shown to moderate the effect of identity salience on behavior (LeBoeuf et al. 2010; Reed II 2004). As causally central features of the self-concept are perceived as more defining of who an individual is, it may be that causally central features seem more important to one’s identity than causally peripheral ones. If this is the case, we would expect importance to mediate the relationship between causal centrality and identity-consistent behavior.

To examine the relationship between identity importance, causal centrality and identity-consistent behavior, Chen and Urminsky (2018) ran a study with American football fans the day of the 2017 Super Bowl, a day when this identity is particularly salient. Participants reported the causal centrality of being a football fan and how important the football fan identity was to their self-concept. To report importance, participants answered questions about how much they felt being a fan of a team describes who they are, how much they identify with that group, and how much they admire the group (Reed II 2004). Replicating the results of the studies about political behavior described above, participants who saw their identity as a football fan as more causally central reported greater willingness to pay for an identity-consistent experience, seeing their favorite team play in the Super Bowl (a result we also found the year before, during the

2016 Super Bowl). This result cannot be explained by income differences between those who see being a football fan as causally central and those who believe that it is more peripheral; the results remained the same after controlling for income.

Further, Chen and Urminsky (2018) found that football fans who saw their football fan identity as more causally central also reported that the identity was more important. As predicted, importance mediated the relationship between causal centrality of the football fan identity and willingness to pay to see their team play in the Super Bowl. These results are consistent with accounts of the self-concept that suggest that important aspects exert more influence over behavior, and provide a novel psychological explanation for what it means for an aspect of the self-concept to be important.

The causal direction between importance and causal centrality cannot be determined from the above study. Does causal centrality influence importance? Or does importance influence causal centrality? Or do they influence each other? While there is no direct research on whether importance influences causal centrality, it is worth noting that some of the results in the previous section suggest that causal centrality may influence importance. Manipulating the causal centrality of an aspect of identity in a hypothetical person influenced how defining it was of identity (Chen et al. 2016; Experiment 3 and Supplemental Experiment 4, Appendix A1), providing evidence that changing causal centrality may influence importance. However, the details of the relationship between causal centrality and identity importance is a key topic that requires further research.

Given that importance mediates the relationship between causal centrality of an identity and identity-based consumption, it is worth noting that causal centrality provides additional information beyond measures of importance. By treating importance as an external attribute of an identity, simply asking consumers about the importance of an identity does not provide insight into how people who think a given identity is important differ from those who do not in their overall representation of the self-concept. Further, understanding how a consumer believes an identity is causally related to other features provides insight into what changes may influence an identity's importance. For example, imagine a person who sees their identity as a London Business School (LBS) alumnus as what led to her successful career. Understanding these causal relationships allows for the prediction that changing the person's career in a way that diminished the causal connection between LBS and their career would decrease the importance of their LBS identity.

Further, differences between these causal connections may have implications for another identity principle: the relevance principle. This principle

states that an identity will be influential to the extent that it is seen as relevant to the context or choice (Reed II et al. 2012). Differences in beliefs about what a given identity is causally linked to may predict which other identities are seen as relevant for choices primarily associated with the given identity. To illustrate, imagine another LBS alumnus, who – unlike the LBS alumnus described above – sees his LBS identity as causally linked to his identity as a husband and father (and not linked to his career). It may be that via their causal connections to the LBS identity, other identities (for example, family and professional identity) become relevant to choices related to the LBS identity. For example, during an alumni giving campaign, it may be effective to appeal not only to the LBS identity, but also to the professional (for the first alumnus) or family identity (for the second alumnus).

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The identity conflict principle highlights how challenging research on identity-based consumption is. It must both explain how an identity fits into the complex self-concept, and understand how the various aspects of the self-concept relate to behavior. The causal centrality approach takes a unique approach to answering these questions by focusing on internal representations of the self-concept; in particular, beliefs about how identities are causally related to each other as well as to individual-level traits. The work reviewed in this chapter has demonstrated that people's self-concepts are more than a list of aspects of the self. They also include beliefs about how these features are causally related to each other, beliefs that guide what people see as most defining of who they are as individuals and that predict who is more or less likely to demonstrate identity-consistent behaviors. Further, the causal centrality approach to self-concept and to identity-based consumption addresses recent calls to connect research on identity-based consumption with theoretical views of the self-concept that describe it as multifaceted (Reed II and Forehand 2016).

The second half of this chapter focused on predicting which members of a given social category are most likely to act in ways consistent with that identity; for example, which Democrat is most likely to vote for a Democratic candidate? The identity conflict principle points out that all people have multiple identities with potentially conflicting norms (LeBoeuf et al. 2010; Markus and Wurf 1987; Oyserman 2009; Reed II et al. 2012). So, another key question for identity researchers is: within a given individual, which of her identities is most likely to influence their behavior? For example, someone may see herself as a (hypothetical) Brand X loyalist and an environmentalist. What would happen if news came out that Brand

X had been violating environmental regulations in manufacturing some of its products? Would the person show behavior consistent with the Brand X user identity (continued loyalty to Brand X), or would she show behavior consistent with the environmentalist identity (discontinued use of Brand X products)? The causal centrality approach also makes predictions about such issues. This theory predicts that in cases where an individual's identities have conflicting norms for behavior, an identity would be more likely to predict behavior the more causally central it is relative to the competing identities. Examining these predictions, and how causal centrality may be used to further address how identity conflict is resolved, is an important avenue for future research.

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21. No (wo)man is an island: dyadic decision-making and identity conflict

Hristina Nikolova and Cait Lamberton

No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friend's or of thine own were. (John Donne, Meditation 17)

INTRODUCTION

In Meditation 17, John Donne reflects on the deep interdependence of humans as it relates to our identities. In a very real sense, Donne suggests that our individual identity is not extricable from the experiences of those around us. Most who are familiar with this quote take this as its meaning: we are, in part, defined by others with whom we are connected.

However, if we read beyond the first sentence, Donne introduces the possibility that being connected to others might create the potential for identity conflicts: other peoples' actions or experiences fundamentally change our identity, and this may be in ways that make us quite uncomfortable. If our friend decides to add or rejects a piece of themselves, we are faced with potential conflicts about who we should then be. That is, if a friend wants to take an action that blows their budget, I am confronted with questions about my own self-control: do I enact my high self-control identity, or let my indulgent self out to play? And if an individual to whom we are connected passes away, we are no longer the same people we were: our self-definition is molded, shaped, enhanced or eroded depending on the identity characteristics, goals, needs, losses and gains of those to whom we are connected. In a consumption context, if I used to make a decision with someone else and suddenly make the same decision alone, different parts of my identity may take the reins than previously did. Such situations are referred to as "identity conflict" experiences, and the literature suggests that their occurrence may trigger a variety of coping mechanisms (Reed II et al. 2012).

But do people, or researchers, understand that identity conflict – and with it, identity change – can result from dyadic (paired) contexts, as compared to individual ones? To frame this chapter, we collected data from 173

Amazon Mechanical Turk panelists (45.7 percent male, $M_{age} = 39$ years), who responded to a set of statements and questions about the extent to which they feel their identity is shaped by, changes, or is thrown into conflict when making decisions with others. We also asked respondents to provide information about their satisfaction with various aspects of their lives. The results of this pilot study are reported in Table 21.1.

These data, though somewhat speculative, offer clear evidence that we recognize that relationships become a part of our identity. First, we asked individuals about the extent to which relationships changed who they were as a person, where 1 indicated a response of “not at all” and 7 indicated “very much.” The mean response fell significantly above the scale midpoint ($M = 5.72$, $SD = 1.13$, $t(172) = 20.09$, $p < 0.0001$), not differing based on gender ($p = 0.93$) or age ($p = 0.55$). In short, we all know that we are not islands, and that others are part of our identities.

But is this good or bad for identity? We find first that identity conflict arising from relationships can erode happiness; and does not appear to happen evenly across our respondents. When given the statement, “When I am in a couple, I often feel conflicted about which aspect of my identity to show,” single individuals reported significantly more agreement than did individuals in couples ($M_{single} = 3.70$, $SD = 1.73$; $M_{couple} = 3.04$, $SD = 1.66$, $p = 0.04$). Further, single individuals do not seem to intuit that conflict may also lead to identity change, significantly underreporting their sense that their identity is malleable in couples, relative to their already-coupled counterparts ($M_{single} = 4.05$, $SD = 1.54$; $M_{couple} = 4.74$, $SD = 1.33$, $p = 0.01$). Importantly, individuals who report feeling a higher degree of identity conflict in relationships also reported being less happy with their lives ($n = 140$, $r = -0.17$, $p = 0.04$), less happy with their identity ($r = -0.25$, $p < 0.01$), and less happy with their relationships ($r = -0.29$, $p < 0.01$), regardless of age, gender or relationship status. And if people feel that being in a couple will lead them to behave in ways that are inconsistent with their own personal identity, they are also significantly less happy with life ($r = -0.27$, $p < 0.01$), relationships ($r = -0.33$, $p < 0.01$) and their own identity ($r = -0.35$, $p < 0.01$), regardless of their age, gender or relationship status.

At the same time, though, it seemed that making decisions in dyads might be a positive force for peoples’ self-understanding: individuals who had a stronger sense that relationships constituted an important part of their self were also happier with their lives in general ($n = 140$; $r = 0.23$, $p = 0.01$), happier with their identity ($r = 0.20$, $p = 0.02$; with the effect being stronger in older consumers, $p = 0.02$, and among men, $p = 0.05$), and happier in their relationships ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.0001$). Thus, the identity integration that occurs in relationships may be a positive force in our lives, or an ability characteristic of happy people.

Table 21.1 Pilot study results

	Mean	SD	Gender effect?	Age effect?	Effect of being romantically involved versus single?
I'm a different person when I'm in a relationship than when I'm single	4.30*	1.79	$p = 0.35$	$p = 0.76$	$p = 0.84$
When I am in a relationship (with a romantic partner, a family member, or a friend), I often develop a new sense of who I am	4.43***	1.51	$p = 0.97$	$p = 0.10$	$F(1, 138) = 6.61$, $p = 0.01$ $M_{single} = 4.05$, $SD = 1.54$ $M_{couple} = 4.74$, $SD = 1.33$ $p = 0.73$
To what extent do you feel that you are a different person when in a couple (with another person, such as a romantic partner, a family member, a friend) than you are alone?	3.92	1.79	$F(1, 138) = 5.55$, $p = 0.02$ $M_{male} = 4.31$, $SD = 1.74$ $M_{female} = 3.61$, $SD = 1.80$	$p = 0.39$	
The person I'm with romantically changes the way I see myself	4.82***	1.54	$p = 0.19$	$b = 0.008$, $t(138) = 1.73$, $p = 0.09$	$F(1, 138) = 3.29$, $p = 0.07$ $M_{single} = 4.57$, $SD = 1.68$ $M_{couple} = 5.07$, $SD = 1.35$ $p = 0.68$
My interactions with my family members change the way I see myself	4.35**	1.61	$p = 0.39$	$p = 0.16$	$p = 0.43$
The people I work with change the way I see myself	3.92	1.66	$p = 0.92$	$p = 0.11$	
When I work on professional projects alone, I think, feel and do things differently than I would if paired with another person	4.70***	1.69	$p = 0.91$	$p = 0.72$	$p = 0.37$

Table 21.1 (continued)

	Mean	SD	Gender effect?	Age effect?	Effect of being romantically involved versus single?
My relationships (with my romantic partner, family and friends) are an important part of who I am	5.72***	1.13	$p = 0.93$	$p = 0.55$	$F(1, 138) = 17.31$, $p < 0.0001$ $M_{single} = 5.16$, $SD = 1.01$ $M_{couple} = 5.97$, $SD = 1.01$
If I'm in a couple, I think of myself and my partner as two members of a single unit	5.14***	1.30	$p = 0.73$	$p = 0.15$	$F(1, 138) = 10.61$, $p = 0.001$ $M_{single} = 4.62$, $SD = 1.30$ $M_{couple} = 5.40$, $SD = 1.22$
If I have a disagreement with someone in my family, I'm willing to change who I am to resolve the conflict	3.74*	1.71	$F(1, 138) = 3.93$, $p = 0.05$ $M_{male} = 3.95$, $SD = 1.64$ $M_{female} = 3.38$, $SD = 1.75$	$p = 0.49$	$p = 0.42$
If I have a disagreement with my romantic partner, I'm willing to change who I am to resolve the conflict	4.13	1.56	$F(1, 138) = 8.63$, $p < 0.01$ $M_{male} = 4.50$, $SD = 1.27$ $M_{female} = 3.76$, $SD = 1.63$	$p = 0.34$	$p = 0.40$

When I am in a couple, I often feel conflicted about which aspect of my identity to show	3.32***	1.76	$F(1, 138) = 3.39,$ $p = 0.07$ $M_{male} = 3.50, SD =$ 1.69 $M_{female} = 2.97,$ $SD = 1.68$	$p = 0.19$	$F(1, 138) = 4.25,$ $p = 0.04$ $M_{single} = 3.70, SD = 1.73$ $M_{couple} = 3.04, SD = 1.66$
When making joint decisions with others, I sometimes act inconsistently with who I am	3.92	1.64	$p = 0.29$	$p = 0.12$	$p = 0.87$
Taking all things together, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? (1 = very dissatisfied; 4 = very satisfied)	3.09***	0.84	$p = 0.76$	$p = 0.21$	$p = 0.10$
Taking all things together, how happy are you with your own identity (your sense of who you are)?	5.41***	1.36	$p = 0.49$	$p = 0.82$	$p = 0.64$
Taking all things together, how happy are you with your relationships with other people (e.g., your romantic partner, family members, friends, etc.)?	5.54***	1.32	$p = 0.15$	$b = -0.009,$ $t(138) =$ $-1.96,$ $p = 0.05$	$p = 0.12$

Notes: All items except for the life satisfaction measure were measured on a seven-point scale, anchored by 1 = not at all and 7 = very much.
* $p \leq 0.05$, ** $p \leq 0.01$, *** $p \leq 0.001$ (indicates difference of mean from scale midpoint).

In this chapter, we will argue that recent work done in dyadic decision-making can reasonably support the claim that dyadic as opposed to individual decision-making contexts can both create and resolve identity conflicts in ways that are important for consumer behavior and well-being. If we can understand the way that being in a couple – whether romantically, as part of a family unit, among friends or at work – can both create identity conflict and push us toward resolution, we can understand the way in which non-solo experiences can help us to grow toward our desired identity or change us in ways that might serve to further isolate us; but much research still remains to be done to this end. We begin by providing a brief background of the identity research in consumer behavior as related to our topic. Then, we discuss literature suggesting that decision-making in dyads might both generate and allow us to resolve identity conflicts. We close by considering the research that needs to be done, if we wish to understand whether our non-island status – the identity conflicts and resolutions we might experience in the context of couples, work partnerships or friendships – should be considered a net positive or negative force for our identities and relationships.

IDENTITY AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Consumers' identity is defined as "any category label to which a consumer self-associates that is amenable to a clear picture of what the person in the category looks like, thinks, feels and does" (Reed II et al. 2012, p. 310). Prior research suggests that consumers' self-concept consists of both collective identities, which arise from memberships in larger sets such as a gender groups, ethnic groups, racial groups, religious groups, nations or regional groups, and relational identities, which arise from specific personal relationships, such as among friends, family members, romantic partners, peers or work colleagues (Oyserman 2007). Regardless of whether identities are anchored in memberships in larger collective groups (referred to as collective identities) or particular interpersonal relationships (referred to as relational identities), they have a powerful influence on consumer behavior, leading consumers to behave in an identity-congruent manner (Oyserman 2009; Reed II et al. 2012). For instance, prior research has robustly shown that consumers exhibit strong preferences for products that help them to express their identities (e.g., Belk 1988; Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005; Kleine et al. 1993; White and Argo 2009), pay greater attention and have more positive reactions to identity-related stimuli (e.g., Forehand and Deshpande 2001), as well as demonstrate increased memory for identity-consistent experiences (Reed II et al. 2012).

Most consumers self-associate with many different category labels, and as a result their self-concept consists of multiple identities (Higgins 1987; Markus and Nurius 1987; McConnell 2011; Roberts and Donahue 1994). For example, a consumer might view herself as a mother, a wife, a professor and an avid hiker, with all of these category labels representing an important part of her self-concept. However, the self-concept is malleable in the sense that the salience of each identity, and the traits, cognitions, behaviors and emotions associated with it, depend on various situational factors (Markus and Kunda 1986; McConnell 2011; Oyserman 2007; Reed II et al. 2012). For instance, prior research shows that a particular identity (for example, ethnicity) is more salient and thus more likely to influence consumers' behavior when the identity appears to be distinctive in a particular context (McGuire et al. 1978; McGuire et al. 1979). Furthermore, environmental cues, such as the presence of outgroup members (Marques et al. 1988), symbols of outgroups and reference groups (Cialdini et al. 1976; Wilder and Shapiro 1984), and visual images and words (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Chatman and von Hippel 2001; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand et al. 2002; Hong et al. 2000), could also increase the temporary salience and influence of an identity. For instance, prior research has shown that exposure to photos of the Great Wall of China rendered consumers' ethnic identity more salient and in turn impacted their evaluations of ethnically targeted advertising (Forehand et al. 2002). Finally, identities that are more central and important (rather than peripheral and less important) to one's self-concept are usually more accessible and more likely to be triggered in a particular consumption context (e.g., Bem 1981; Schmitt et al. 1988).

Since consumers hold multiple identities, they need to assure that their behavior is consistent with the behavioral expectations of each identity, defined by the norms and customs of the social context in which the identity is situated (Stryker and Burke 2000; Stryker and Statham 1985). However, it is possible that not all identities are consistent with one another; that is, the norms associated with the different identities might present conflicting behavioral expectations. For example, consider a consumer who identifies herself as being a mother and an academic researcher; in this case, the behavioral expectations of being a devoted mother who spends a lot of time with her children might often conflict with the expectations of being a prolific researcher, which necessitates long work hours.

This results in what has been referred to as "identity conflict" in the self-concept (Reed II et al. 2012). Consumers are motivated to resolve this identity conflict and could engage in a variety of psychological processes ranging from adoption to expulsion in order to mitigate it (Reed II and Forehand 2016). Primarily, consumers employ the following two strategies

to attenuate identity conflict: (1) adopting identities which have consistent norms of behaviors, to ensure a harmonious self-concept; and (2) managing the relative salience of the various conflicting identities in cases when this exists; in other words, consumers try to achieve a balanced salience among the conflicting identities. For example, a consumer who experiences conflict between her Asian and American identities might react to Asian identity primes (which are supposed to lead to behaviors consistent with that identity) by an increased likelihood of engaging in behaviors consistent with her American identity (Benet-Martinez et al. 2002; Mok and Morris 2009). Such behavior – that is, avoidance of the primed identity and propensity to act in accord with the conflict identity – is an effective way in which consumers could resolve identity conflict and keep the multiple identities in balance. Importantly, prior research suggests that consumption can often lead to identity conflict or offer ways in which consumers could resolve it (Reed II et al. 2012). We propose that dyadic interactions and joint decision-making can both create identity conflict in consumers' self-concepts and provide means for attenuating such conflict.

DYADIC INTERACTIONS AND IDENTITY

Prior research has generally studied the way that consumers express and manage their identities in individual decisions. However, recent work highlights that consumers do not live in isolation and often share both the decision-making process and the consumption experience with others (Gorlin and Dhar 2012; Nikolova and Lamberton 2016; Simpson et al. 2012); thus, for a large number of important consumer decisions the dominant decision-making unit in the marketplace is indeed the couple, or pair of consumers (Nikolova and Lamberton 2016). For example, decisions about consumer durables (for example, cars, color TVs, air conditioners), apartments, hotel rooms, vacation packages and restaurants – often used in the literature as stimuli for studying different consumer behavior phenomena – are more likely to be made jointly than alone (Nikolova and Lamberton 2016).

Can Joint Decision-Making Contexts Create Identity Conflict?

Past literature suggests that joint decision-making can create identity conflict in several different ways. First, dyadic decision-making contexts in which two individuals interact with each other to reach one joint decision might lead a consumer to adopt a new identity, which might conflict with the other identities already existing in their self-concept. Support for this

prediction comes from past research showing that due to mimicry effects, people often adopt the identity of their partner, assimilating the partner's traits, attitudes and behaviors into their own self-concept (e.g., Andersen and Chen 2002; Aron et al. 1991; Dijksterhuis et al. 1998; Gabriel et al. 2005). Such mimicry, which leads to changes in the structure of one's self-concept through the adoption of the partner's identity as one's own, can be beneficial, in that they help the two partners to coordinate their interactions together (e.g., Bargh and Chartrand 1999; Bavelas et al. 1986; Cheng and Chartrand 2003; LaFrance and Broadbent 1976) and could thus aid joint decision-making through assimilation of the partner's preferences. Such a process might mirror the manner in which any two organisms adapt to one another, given power differentials or status, priorities and preferences.

However, despite these positive effects, the adoption of the partner's identity could also have negative consequences, specifically to the extent that doing so creates identity conflict in a given member of the dyad. For instance, consider Julia, whose husband Matt is an avid weightlifter. In order to build affiliation, Julia becomes passionate about weightlifting and starts incorporating some of Matt's "manly traits" related to weightlifting into her self-concept (for example, competitiveness, aggressiveness, and so on). At this point, Julia may be faced with an identity conflict, to the extent that this new identity is not consistent with the traditional norms of her gender identity, which societal expectations propose will be manifest in being cooperative, nurturing and submissive (Balkan 1966; Eagly et al. 2000; Wood and Eagly 2010, 2012). Therefore, Julia must make a decision: does she reduce the adoption of Matt's identity traits into her own, thereby missing an opportunity to build a close affiliation and common experience, or does she take the risk of behaving in a way that may run counter to society's expectations about her gender? In short, does she shape an identity that serves the proximate relationship (with Matt) or the broader social context? Alternatively, instead of choosing only one of those identities, Julia might reconstruct the definitions and behavioral expectations of both identities in her mind in order to make them more consistent with each other. For instance, she might adopt a new definition of her female identity (for example, "strong is the new skinny") that is more consistent with Matt's weightlifting identity.

Furthermore, prior research also shows that in addition to adopting each other's identities, married partners come to perceive their relationship as a fundamental part of their self-concept (Aron et al. 1992; Bolton 1961) and develop a new couple-oriented identity (Agnew et al. 1998). In this process, individuals begin seeing themselves as a single collective unit that has its own separate couple identity (Agnew et al. 1998; Baldwin 1992;

Planalp 1987). The enactments of this couple-oriented identity might either be harmonious or in conflict with the enactments of each partner's individual identities (Epp and Price 2008). Consequently, on one hand, this couple-oriented identity could have positive effects: it increases marital satisfaction and feelings of mutuality in couples (Reid et al. 2006), and minimizes negative effects of the caregiving experience on the mental health of the spouse who is the caregiver (Badr et al. 2007). After all, in the extreme cases of couple-oriented identity, caring for the other is simply caring for one's extended self. In a related vein, allowing the couple-oriented identity to not only take precedence over the individual identities of the relationship partners, but to completely replace them, has been shown to have positive effects on joint goal pursuits (Wittenberg-Cox 2018); specifically, couples who strive for a lifetime family career (in which they seek to complement rather than compete with each other) versus two individual careers might reap important benefits such as greater satisfaction, more flexibility and greater financial security (Wittenberg-Cox 2018). However, on the other hand, the development of couple-oriented identity (we-ness) could create conflict with both new individual identities adopted after the couple-oriented identity is established (for example, "parental identity"), and the other pre-existing identities in the consumer's self-concept. For instance, when couples have children, the addition of the parental identities of being a mother and father often creates conflict with their couple-oriented identity, leading to relationship stress. Similarly, many consumers often have to balance the demands of their couple identity against those of their work identity (Luyckx et al. 2014). The successful resolution of this conflict through balanced commitment to both identities has been shown to lead to greater life satisfaction and lower stress (Luyckx et al. 2014) than the failure to hold a balanced commitment. But who will be able to successfully balance both the individual and the couple-oriented identity, and how?

Similar types of collective identities also develop in groups that are larger than dyads (that is, families consisting of three or more people). Specifically, Epp and Price (2008) suggest that each family develops its own family identity, defined as the "the gestalt of qualities and attributes that make it a particular family and that differentiate it from other families" (Bennett et al. 1988, p. 212, as quoted in Epp and Price 2008). They further highlight that within each family there is always a constellation of three different types of identities: the family's collective identity, the relational identities of smaller groups (for example, siblings, parent-child) and individual identities of each family member. Consequently, there could be either synergy or discord among these three types of identities. As a result, the tensions or synergies among individual, relational and family identi-

ties would inevitably shape the joint decision-making and consumption choices of the family (Epp and Price 2008). For instance, if there is discord among the identities, consumers might highlight the joint family identity over their individual ones (Aaker and Lee 2001; Hamilton and Biehal 2005) in order to resolve the identity conflict in their joint decision-making.

Even if dyadic interactions might not lead to the addition of a new identity to one's self-concept, conflict can still arise due to the emergence of socially activated goals in dyadic contexts. For example, prior research has shown that couples consisting of a low and a high self-control trait partner make as poor joint self-control decisions as couples composed of two low self-control partners (Dzhogleva and Lamberton 2014). Importantly, this happens because higher self-control individuals tend to prioritize pro-relationship behaviors over their personal preference for restraint. That is, high self-control individuals are willing to give in to the indulgent preferences of their lower self-control partner in order to preserve relationship harmony; they go along with their lower self-control partner to get along. Similarly, in the context of ethical decision-making, when individuals make joint decisions they tend to be less ethical and are more likely to claim unwarranted rewards than they would if they made the same decision alone, because they (correctly) believe that "partnering-in-crime" facilitates bonding (Nikolova et al. 2018). In both of these works, it appears that dyadic decision-making creates conflict between one's relational identity (that is, how one is defined with relation to their partner; Cross et al. 2003; Oyserman 2007) and one's individual identity (of being a disciplined, high self-control person in Dzhogleva and Lamberton 2014; and of being a moral person in Nikolova et al. 2018). Consumers seem to resolve this identity conflict by engaging in behaviors consistent with their relational identities that help them to achieve various relationship goals, such as bonding with a partner or maintaining harmony in the relationship. Such behaviors would appear to be inconsistent with prior research if looked only through the lenses of one's individual identities (since they violate the expectations of one's individual identity of being a high self-control or moral person), rather than through the prism of dyadic decision-making and its impact on identity conflict.

Finally, it should be noted that in addition to creating intrapersonal identity conflict (which requires consumers to balance the expectations of multiple conflicting identities), dyadic decision-making might also give rise to interpersonal identity conflict, or conflict between the different individual identities of the partners. For example, when a couple consisting of a low self-control and a high self-control partner might have to jointly decide whether to have pizza or salad for dinner (Dzhogleva and Lamberton 2014), this would inevitably lead them to experience an

interpersonal clash of identities, which will need to be resolved in order for them to be able to reach a joint decision. It is important for both researchers and practitioners to recognize these interpersonal identity conflicts, as they lead to different decision processes and negotiation approaches (Commuri and Gentry 2005), as well as different influence strategies (Corfman and Lehmann 1987; Cotte and Wood 2004; Davis 1976; Filiatrault and Ritchie 1980; Moore et al. 2002; Spiro 1983; Su et al. 2003; Ward 2005), and as such have an important impact on joint consumption decisions and outcomes.

Can Joint Decision-Making Offer Opportunities to Resolve Identity Conflict?

If joint decision-making is likely to create such conflict, we might argue that, particularly in stressful conditions, the wise consumer would retreat to an individual decision-making stance or abdicate decision-making to another partner. However, we propose that in fact, during major life transitions, when identity is most threatened, joint decision-making contexts can help to resolve identity conflict and aid in the transition to new identities. We will focus on two specific life transition periods: retirement and the beginning of parenthood.

Retirement is both theoretically important as it creates identity conflict (Reed II et al. 2012), and practically relevant as retired consumers will represent 20 percent of the United States market by the end of the next decade (Live Well Financial 2017). Presently, retirement is posed to create identity conflict more than ever before, due to healthier lifestyles and technological and medicine advances which have significantly increased people's life quality and life expectancy. As a result, even though aging individuals might still be able to engage in activities consistent with their identities at earlier stages of their lives (such as intense exercising, hiking, and so on), doing so might be inconsistent with the societal expectations of their newly adopted "retiree" identity. Consumers need to reduce this conflict across their past, present and future identities and do so via engaging in various self-regulatory processes that restore the identity balance in one's self-concept. Consequently, in this life stage consumers experience consumer identity renaissance (or an "evolving self"; Schau et al. 2009), which manifests itself into extensive identity work to weave seamlessly old and new identities into one's self-concept and elaborate consumption enactments (Schau et al. 2009).

Importantly, one's relationship and decision-making partners play a significant role in the consumer identity renaissance experienced during retirement. For instance, prior research suggests that if consumers pass through this identity renaissance jointly with their spouse (that is, both

partners retire at the same time), they experience greater retirement satisfaction (Szinovacz and Davey 2005), thus hinting at the important role one's partner might have in aiding the resolution of identity conflict usually experienced at the time of retirement.

Similarly, the transition to motherhood is notoriously challenging to individual identity, as has been noted by consumer researchers (e.g., Banister et al. 2010; Fischer et al. 2007). In such cases, qualitative theory predicts the use of a wide range of potential "coping strategies, compensator mechanisms, antithetical meanings and ideals" (Arnould and Thompson 2005, as quoted in Banister et al. 2010). It may be that, in fact, dyadic decisions could offer a means of building and understanding this new identity. That is, making decisions with parenting partners or other individuals undergoing a similar identity shift may help new mothers to better define and understand their new identity. For example, new moms' groups and online forums (that is, the "mamasphere"; Orton-Johnson 2017) have been identified as platforms where identity conflict may both occur and be resolved: solidarity with some others is found, while distinction from others becomes clear. We might propose that to the extent that such forums allow mothers to discuss their parenting choices and converge on joint preferences, such navigation may allow them to transition into their new identity more successfully. Healthy joint decision-making with parenting partners may also help new mothers to understand the way that their identity has (or has not) changed, to signal new aspects of their identity, or to seek confirmation of emerging identity characteristics.

The transition to fatherhood is no less interpersonally and intrapersonally challenging for male consumers (Genesoni and Tallandini 2009). New fathers often feel torn apart between the way their life used to be (that is, their pre-existing masculine identities) and this new stage of their life (that is, their new parental identity; Genesoni and Tallandini 2009), and the transition to the new identity usually takes more time than the transition to motherhood (Draper 2003). Studies demonstrate that dyadic interactions with one's partner revolving around the care for the new baby and the resulting infant-care skill acquisition have a positive effect on the identity conflict resolution process and the establishment of the fatherhood identity (Maggill-Evans et al. 2007). Furthermore, marketers also offer means to new dads for resolving identity conflict and easier transition to the new parental identity through the creation of new product categories such as the sports utility vehicle (SUV). Such categories reduce the amount of identity conflict that new fathers may experience in their product choice, and allow them to more quickly adopt the father identity in a way that would not conflict with their masculine identity.

WHAT IS THE NET EFFECT OF DYADIC DECISION-MAKING ON IDENTITY?

In the survey with which we opened this chapter, we noted that consumers seem to intuit both that relationships can create identity conflict, but also that the successful integration of one's relationships into the self-concept could be associated with a happier life and more satisfaction with one's own identity. It appears that research opens the door to these possibilities as well. But what remains unclear is whether and under what conditions, borrowing Donne's image, it is good or bad for our identities that we are not islands.

To answer this question, we might ask whether effects depend on the stage in which a relationship is considered. Early in relationships, one might anticipate that moving into a dyadic context destabilizes identity, creating the conflicts discussed above. In fact, it may be the very possibility of identity conflict and change that creates the excitement of new relationships: we not only do not know who the other person may be, but we are also unsure of who we may become. However, as relationships mature, it may be that making decisions with someone else helps to stabilize and reinforce our identity: identities in the dyad become stronger, norms are developed, and consumption choices reinforce both. If this is the case, it is particularly important that we only make joint decisions about major life transitions once we have passed the early stages of a relationship; otherwise, we may be piling identity transition on identity uncertainty, reaching joint decisions which do little to further anyone's goals.

We might also ask other questions about the way that relationships create and resolve identity over time. For example, might dyad members "average" their identities over time, or are there cases when dyad members are more likely to polarize on identity over the course of a relationship? Perhaps more dramatically, we would learn a great deal about both identity and dyadic experiences if we could learn whether some identities simply cannot live together in a dyad, while others can. That is, is it simply impossible for someone with a strong moral identity to live happily with someone with a weaker moral identity? Can someone with a strong volunteer identity, who may be chronically given to sadness and compassion, flourish alongside someone with a strong athlete identity, who might be more likely to display anger in service of their competitive drive (Coleman and Williams 2013)? Thus, the foundation of a strong, long-lasting dyad might be to determine conflicts in which identity attributes, values and goals would be absolutely detrimental to the relationship success, and which would be more tolerable. We may also ask whether certain dimensions of identities lend themselves to more or less successful dyads: might it be that complex identities may

allow more successful dyadic relationships, because individuals can find some level of identity overlap across a range of partners? Or might high identity-complexity dyads simply face confusion, uncertain which identity the other is attempting to enact at any one time?

Researchers may also work to better understand the relationship goals of dyad partners. Are there cases when dyad partners help one another to reinforce or develop new identities intentionally? In an extreme case, this kind of exploration may help us to understand when individuals take on the role of Pygmalion, the sculptor who creates his own partner as a work of art. Certainly, one partner who persistently “coaches” another through consumption choices, helping them to pattern their decisions about food, clothing, hobbies or even ideas, could shape the other’s identity. Does such effortful identity construction of one partner by the other lead to positive outcomes? Can it, if the partner receiving the coaching has in fact assented to the process? Is such an externally created identity as stable as one that an individual assembles for themselves, or that is more incidentally shaped? Perhaps most importantly, though we have some evidence that dyadic decision contexts might be both helpful and challenging since they could both create identity conflict (Reed II et al. 2012) and offer means for its resolution, we have a great deal to learn about what it means to embrace or reject our status as something other than islands, in Donne’s terms. This chapter suggests that dyadic contexts could create identity conflict because of possible assimilation of one’s partner’s identity, the development and adoption of a new couple-oriented identity, or simply the emergence of socially activated goals; but at the same time, can also aid its resolution during major life transitions (for example, retirement and the beginning of parenthood), when identity is most threatened. Importantly, the chapter raises interesting and important questions for future research that could help to illuminate the net effect of the identity conflicts and resolutions we might experience in dyadic contexts on our identities, lives and relationships. If we can understand the way that dyadic decision-making could – under some circumstances – allow us to develop our own identities, or grow or enrich our relationships, we may learn more about both our identities and the nature of the relationships that help to build richer, more meaningful lives.

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22. Cultural identities in the era of globalization: implications for consumer behavior

Carlos J. Torelli and Hyewon Oh

As globalization increases, the marketplace is growing in cultural diversity in terms of both brand offerings (that is, supply) and consumers (that is, demand). In the last decade, we have seen an explosion in the number of global competitors not only from developed markets (for example, Western Europe), but also from the developing world (for example, the BRIC countries – Brazil, Russia, India, China). Consider, for example, the leadership position achieved in recent years by the Chinese Lenovo Group in the personal computer industry (Hachman 2014), or the footprint of Indian's Tata Group in the luxury cars segment (via the acquisition of the Jaguar and Land Rover brands). This growth is coupled with an increased pattern of cultural hybridization of product offerings, fueled by blurring brand ownership through cross-border acquisitions, and the ubiquity of a global production supply chain. For example, the acquisition of American Budweiser by Belgium InBev group might cast doubt on the “Americanness” of Budweiser. Similarly, an iPhone with a label indicating that it is “designed by Apple in California,” but “assembled in China” might create confusion on the cultural connections of such an iconic product.

Cultural diversity in consumer markets is also growing thanks to the emergence of a robust middle class in emerging economies (for example, China and India), the acceleration in immigration patterns in developed markets (for example, growth in numbers of Hispanics in the United States), and the increased cultural curiosity of worldwide consumers. Thus, in the globalized markets of the twenty-first century, a wide range of brands brings a variety of cultures to a consumer population that is also growing in cultural diversity. How do consumers navigate a marketplace loaded with a mixture of cultural meanings? Do they integrate and mix these meanings into their own identities? How do consumers respond to products and brands that simultaneously mix two or more cultures in a single offering? This chapter provides answers to these important questions. It starts by defining culture and its importance for fulfilling identity needs of the individual, as well as discussing how brands can become icons

that help consumers to fulfill such needs. This is followed by a review of recent research on the mixing of cultures “within” the individual, as well as “outside” the individual in products and brands, while highlighting their bi-directional influences on consumer behavior. Finally, the chapter synthesizes the discussion into an actionable theoretical framework and identifies knowledge gaps for guiding a future research agenda.

CULTURAL IDENTITY NEEDS OF CONSUMERS

Consumers often buy brands as a way of signaling to the self and others those aspects of their personality that are self-defining (Levy 1959) for a particular identity. An identity is “any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 312). Consumers have an almost limitless array of category labels for identification, and hence a variety of identities which they might signal through consumption. For instance, a consumer might buy a pair of Nike shoes to signal their superiority in athletic performance (a core element of Nike’s brand identity). However, another consumer might buy the same product in view of Nike’s significance as an American icon (Torelli 2013). In the latter case, the consumer appropriates the brand meaning to signal a self-relevant cultural identity (Swaminathan et al. 2007). In this section, we define culture, explain how culture shapes consumers’ social identity needs, and highlight the instrumentality of brands for fulfilling such needs.

What is Culture?

Culture is defined here as shared elements that provide the standards for perceiving, believing, evaluating, communicating and acting among those who share a language, a historical period and a geographic location (Triandis 1995). The name of the geographic location of a culture is often used as the central concept that defines the culture. Such geographic location often overlaps with a country (for example, Chinese culture), but can also encompass a broader region including multiple countries (for example, East Asian culture), or be circumscribed to subregions or subgroups within a country (for example, Southern or Hispanic cultures in the United States). Regardless of the level of aggregation, culture consists of shared knowledge about values, ideals, beliefs and objects used by a human group for developing a common frame of reference to make sense of reality, coordinate activities between group members, adapt to the environment and provide a sense of belongingness through group membership (Chiu and Hong 2006). This chapter focuses on the role of culture for shaping

people's reality and providing a sense of group membership due to their instrumentality for shaping consumers' identities, and particularly so when trying to resolve the conflict between contrastive identities.

Cultural Identity Needs

Culture is a key determinant of the tendency to use culturally determined membership groups for making sense of reality, as well as of the type of identity (for example, national identity or ethnic identity) likely to be salient in a given context (Oyserman 2009). For instance, in collectivistic cultures, that foster interdependence and the prioritization of collective (over personal) goals, identities are more likely to be "anchored" in group referents (Reed et al. 2012) encompassing nationality (for example, American) or ethnicity (for example, Hispanic American), as opposed to narrower individual roles (for example, doctor; Oyserman 2009) than in individualistic cultures (that is, cultures that foster independence and the prioritization of personal goals; Triandis 1995).

The identity-based motivation model (Oyserman 2009) proposes that identities are powerful drivers of judgments and behaviors. Identities include not only knowledge about group membership and a positive sense of in-group connections, but also the readiness to act and make sense of the world in identity-congruent ways. For instance, the American identity identifies those who reside in the United States (US) and share the belief that Americans stay at the top of the world's social hierarchy. This vertical view is consistent with the notion of American exceptionalism, and is fully aligned with the values of competition and status-seeking nurtured in the vertical individualistic American culture (Shavitt et al. 2006). Accordingly, research shows that Americans (versus East Asians) are particularly likely to use power for improving their status (Torelli and Shavitt 2010), and to favor high-status products and brands (Torelli et al. 2012).

Brands as Cultural Identity Symbols

Culture not only consists of values and beliefs, but also manifests itself in objects such as brands and products. Brands often acquire cultural meanings and come to embody the values and ideals nurtured by a cultural group (Torelli and Ahluwalia 2012; Torelli et al. 2010). For example, some iconic US brands associated with self-enhancement values of success and power (for example, Harley-Davidson), and some Venezuelan brands associated with conservation values of prioritizing family bonds, represent how abstract values fostered in each culture are reflected in its brands and products (Torelli et al. 2010). Brands that are consensually perceived to

symbolize an abstract cultural identity are regarded as cultural icons. To the extent that these brands embody cultural ideals, they can act as identity reminders, and serve as subtle cultural primes connecting consumers with a cherished cultural identity (Torelli 2013; Torelli and Cheng 2011).

Consuming Brands for Fulfilling Cultural Identity Needs

Because iconic brands symbolize the beliefs, ideas and values of a cultural group, consumers with a heightened need to symbolize a cultural identity will judge iconic brands as highly instrumental for fulfilling such needs. By being a patron of an iconic brand, one can emphasize the possession of the cultural identity and the alignment with and adherence to the culture.

Making salient a cultural identity triggers favorable attitudes toward objects that are identity-congruent. For instance, when making an ethnic identity salient (for example, Asian), consumers evaluate more favorably advertisements targeted to the ethnic in-group (for example, as depicted in copy and advertisement images; Forehand et al. 2002), than when the identity is not made salient. Because commitment to a cultural identity makes the identity more salient in different contexts, consumers who are highly identified with the identity are particularly likely to favor iconic brands (over non-iconic ones) to fulfill their salient cultural identity needs and even to be willing to pay more for such iconic brands (Amaral and Torelli 2018).

Furthermore, because a salient identity brings to mind identity-consistent decisions that do not require further reflection, the higher valuation of iconic brands occurs rather automatically and without conscious deliberation. In other words, consumers process information about an iconic brand easily and feel that it is right to favor the brand (Torelli 2013). In turn, this feeling results in a pleasing processing experience accompanied with enhanced brand valuation (Torelli and Ahluwalia 2012). Over time, continued reliance on iconic brands for fulfilling salient cultural identity needs can contribute to developing strong self-brand relationships (Amaral and Torelli 2018; Escalas and Bettman 2005). In turn, forming a strong bond with a culturally symbolic brand, due to its cultural identity meaning, can shield the brand against negative publicity when cultural identity needs are salient (Swaminathan et al. 2007).

MIXING OF CULTURAL IDENTITIES “WITHIN” THE PERSON

As stated earlier, globalization has exponentially amplified people's interactions with lifestyles, customs and traditions from different cultures.

Consequently, the number of individuals who identify themselves with two (bicultural) or more cultures (multicultural) as opposed to a single culture (monocultural) is rapidly on the rise. For instance, in the United States, the number of white and black biracial Americans more than doubled in the 2000–2010 period (Jones and Bullock 2012). Similarly, 37.5 percent of Canadian children in the 2016 Census had an immigrant background, and it is estimated that this number will reach 49.1 percent by 2036 (Statistics-Canada 2017). Importantly, such culture mixing, which manifests as the transmission of cultural products such as ideas, meaning and values across national borders, often requires individuals to negotiate potentially conflicting beliefs (Reed et al. 2012). Moreover, as Phinney (1999, pp. 26–27) states, “increasing numbers of people find that the conflicts are not between different groups but between different cultural values, attitudes, and expectations within themselves.” Bicultural or multicultural individuals who identify with and internalize more than one culture, such as immigrants, sojourners or citizens living in multicultural societies, are those who manage different cultural identities in their day-to-day lives (Benet-Martínez et al. 2002). In this section, by focusing on bicultural identification, we examine how individuals organize and manage conflicts across two different cultural identities within themselves, and the downstream consequences of these identification strategies on psychological and socio-cultural well-being.

Acculturation and Biculturalism

The theoretical framework of bicultural identification can be found in acculturation research (Graves 1967). Acculturation refers to the process of cultural and psychological changes that individuals undergo as a result of intercultural contact (Berry 1997). People vary in terms of the strategies adopted to manage the conflicts between the dominant cultural orientation (the host or mainstream culture) and the heritage cultural orientation (ethnic minority or non-dominant culture). The four main strategies are: assimilation (identification with the dominant culture only), separation (identification with the heritage culture only), integration (identification with both cultures) and marginalization (identification with neither culture) (Berry 1997). Biculturalism falls into the integration strategy, where individuals are exposed to two different cultures and internalize both of them within their identities (Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2013). Although integration involves two cultures, bicultural individuals may differ in the degree to which they organize and combine these two different cultures. In fact, Reed and Forehand (2016) propose a framework that distinguishes the different processes that influence the interplay between multiple identities within an individual: adoption, reinforcement, dilution, elevation,

suppression and expulsion. Next, we examine the strategies that bicultural individuals utilize to resolve identity conflicts, and how they are moderated by the degree to which two cultural identities are integrated.

Cultural Frame-Switching and Bicultural Identity Integration

One common adaptation strategy among biculturals is cultural frame-switching. Cultural frame-switching refers to the process of adaptation by which biculturals respond to situationally salient cultural cues or contexts by activating cultural meaning systems. For example, for Hong Kong Chinese students, exposure to Chinese cultural symbols (for example, a Chinese dragon) increases the degree to which they endorse Chinese values as compared to the exposure to US cultural symbols (for example, the American flag) (Hong et al. 2000). Although some part of cultural frame-switching is automatic, bicultural individuals also consciously choose between cultural frames to meet the cultural demands of the situation (Birman 1994). For example, an Asian American consumer could alternate their cultural identities, and be Asian at home and American at work (Forehand et al. 2002). Prior work has demonstrated such compartmentalization of cultural identities and frame-switching across a wide range of cultures and populations (Lau-Gesk 2003). Recent research has expanded to cultural switching among monocultural individuals who are exposed to the tenets of a foreign culture (for example, European Americans living in Chinatown) (Alter and Kwan 2009). Cultural frame-switching has market consequences, as consumers tend to favor products that are consistent with the accessible cultural frame. For instance, Mexican American consumers residing in the US prefer songs from a Hispanic rock band as a way to connect with their Hispanic identity (Torelli et al. 2017).

Interestingly, cultural frame-switching can exhibit different forms depending on whether bicultural individuals perceive their cultural identities as compatible and complementary, or as oppositional and contradictory. The individual difference is called bicultural identity integration (BII) (Benet-Martínez et al. 2002), which is composed of perceptions of overlap (versus distance) and perceptions of harmony (versus conflict) between the person's two cultural identities (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005). In terms of cultural frame-switching, those who are high on BII show a congruent priming effect in responding to cultural cues, whereas low BII individuals present a reverse priming effect in response to cultural cues (Benet-Martínez et al. 2002). Beyond cultural frame-switching, the degree to which two cultures are integrated or conflicted has substantial downstream consequences on bicultural individuals' psychological and socio-cultural well-being.

Consequences of Culture Mixing “Within” the Person

Integrating two different cultures within oneself is not always an easy job, which often yields acculturative stress (Berry 1997). In fact, bicultural individuals suffer from “double consciousness,” which arises from their two different cultural backgrounds (DuBois 1903/1989), and strive to live a life between two cultural groups as a “marginal man” (Stonequist 1935). Such stress from cultural identity conflicts has negative impacts on the self-esteem and mental health of bicultural individuals (Gil et al. 1994). However, consistent with the idea that individuals are motivated to reduce conflict across multiple identities (Reed et al. 2012), dual cultural identities can be integrated in a way that attenuates identity conflict, which can actually benefit biculturals’ well-being. Prior findings suggest that integration between two cultures within bicultural individuals is highly associated with their adjustment (Nguyen and Benet-Martínez 2013). Through integration, biculturals develop integrative complexity, which refers to the capability and willingness to accept different cultural perspectives and blend them together to create a coherent mental representation (Benet-Martínez and Haritatos 2005). Integrative complexity of biculturals (versus monoculturals) is associated with psychological and work outcomes such as greater life satisfaction, self-esteem, flexibility and creativity (Maddux and Galinsky 2009).

Flexibility in Identity Definition

The above discussion seems to suggest that identities are stable systems with clear boundaries and structures. However, current conceptualizations rooted in social cognition research assume a not-well-integrated structure, and a highly contextualized definition of a social identity depending on what referent group is relevant in a given context (Oyserman 2009). Indeed, identities can not only be “anchored” in different referent groups, but also bridge various classifications (for example, an ethnic and a national identity) (Reed et al. 2012). Specifically, the boundaries that define a cultural group can be flexible and expanded to fulfill cultural identity goals. This is illustrated in research on cultural distinctiveness (Torelli et al. 2017), or the feeling of separation from the surrounding cultural environment that people often experience when visiting a foreign, unfamiliar culture. This feeling of separation is often accompanied by a desire to connect with familiar things from “home,” which then expands consumers’ in-group boundaries to include a related cultural group within a broadened definition of home, subsequently triggering a strong pro-in-group bias. This broadened definition allows them to fulfill the need to connect with home by favoring brands and products associated with the related cultural group.

CULTURE-MIXING IN PRODUCTS AND BRANDS

In globalized markets, symbols of different cultures often occupy the same space at the same time. Unlike the priming of a single cultural frame discussed in the past section, exposure to symbols of multiple cultures, or culture-mixing, activates not only one, but two or more cultural representations at the same time.

Consumers' Responses to Culture-Mixing

Culture-mixing draws attention to the conflict between the juxtaposed cultures, resulting in the expectation that cultures are discrete entities with relatively impermeable boundaries. For instance, compared to showing American participants with culture-neutral products that carry prototypic British brand names (monocultural priming), showing them iconic Mexican products that carry British brand names (culture mixed product) simultaneously activates representations of Mexican and British cultures, which increases perceived differences between cultures (Torelli et al. 2011). This effect emerges not only for the target cultures (for example, Mexican and British), but also for other cultures (for example, Puerto Rican and Canadian).

Because experiencing conflict between identities is an aversive state (Reed et al. 2012), consumers often evaluate culture-mixed products less favorably than monocultural ones. For instance, recent research (Torelli and Ahluwalia 2012) shows that Americans evaluate less favorably a culture-mixed product (Sony cappuccino machines: the Sony brand is iconic of Japan, whereas Cappuccino machines are iconic of Italy) than a monocultural one (Sony toaster oven: only the Japanese Sony is culturally symbolic). This effect emerges in spite of the similar levels of moderate fit of the two products with the Sony brand. Furthermore, the less favorable evaluations of the culture-mixed product are driven by the subjective experience of disfluency (that is, feeling that the product is not “right”) triggered by the simultaneous activation of two different cultural schemas. This finding highlights the undesirability of experiencing an identity conflict (Reed et al. 2012).

Personal and Situational Factors Affecting Responses to Culture-Mixing

One way to mitigate the spontaneous negative reaction toward culture-mixed products could be to combine the two contrastive cultural images to reduce the perceived conflict – which might require mustering cognitive resources. Indeed, research suggests that thoughtful elaboration about

cultural complexities (either spontaneously or temporarily induced) can attenuate consumers' negative reactions to culture-mixed products (Torelli et al. 2011). More generally, psychological and situational factors that induce openness to the novel experiences from intercultural encounters promote integrating the contrastive cultures and reducing conflict. For instance, Chen et al. (2016) demonstrate that openness to experience favorably impacts the creative benefits of experiencing culture-mixing in the environment. Similarly, Keh et al. (2016) showed that endorsing autonomy values of stimulation and self-direction positively predicts favorable attitudes of Chinese consumers toward culturally mixed phonosemantic brand translations (that is, translations from a Western language to Chinese that maintain the foreign sounding of the name, while conveying the brand meaning in the Chinese language).

In contrast, factors that promote closed-mindedness or the protection of one of the cultural identities hinder the reconciliation needed to favorably evaluate culture mixing. Consistent with this notion, De Keersmaecker et al. (2016) demonstrate that people who are high (versus low) in need for cognitive closure, or those who need a firm answer in a psychologically ambiguous situation, are less favorable toward culturally mixed stimuli (for example, fusion cuisine). Past research also suggests that a motivation to defend a stable cultural worldview free from ambiguity can promote negative responses toward culture-mixing (Torelli and Cheng 2011). Torelli et al. (2011) show the influence of a culture defense mindset triggered by thoughts of one's own death (that is, mortality salience), such that people are particularly intolerant of contamination of brands symbolizing their culture when they are under the joint influence of culture mixing and mortality salience. In one of their studies, upon inducing (versus not) mortality salience, US participants evaluated a marketing plan of Nike (an American icon), which involved some questionable actions to increase its competitiveness in a foreign market (for example, eliminating the "swoosh" symbol and replacing the Nike brand name with the Arabic word for "sportsmanship" to penetrate the Middle East market). Results showed that, when mortality was salient, participants evaluated the marketing plan less favorably after evaluating culture-mixed products (for example, a Chinese brand of breakfast cereal) than after evaluating monocultural products (for example, an American brand of breakfast cereal).

Accordingly, personal or situational factors that heighten the motivation to defend a valued cultural identity should incite unfavorable responses to culture-mixing. Consistent with this notion, Cheon et al. (2016) showed that disgust toward ingroup–outgroup cultural mixing is particularly pronounced among those who endorse higher levels of patriotism. Similarly, Shi et al. (2016) demonstrated that individuals who highly identify with

their heritage culture tend to exhibit implicit prejudice toward the foreign culture represented in a culturally mixed stimulus.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The review in this chapter highlights the importance of considering cultural identities in a globalized world for explaining consumer behavior. Figure 22.1 summarizes the key findings reviewed here into a theoretical framework illustrating how cultural identities can help to explain the behavior of globalized consumers. Mixing of cultural identities can occur both within the individual (that is, biculturalism or multiculturalism) and outside the individual (that is, in a product or brand). Such mixing is likely to generate conflict, and based on situational constraints and personal factors, consumers would be more or less likely to resolve the conflict and integrate the cultural identities. In turn, this will have psychological

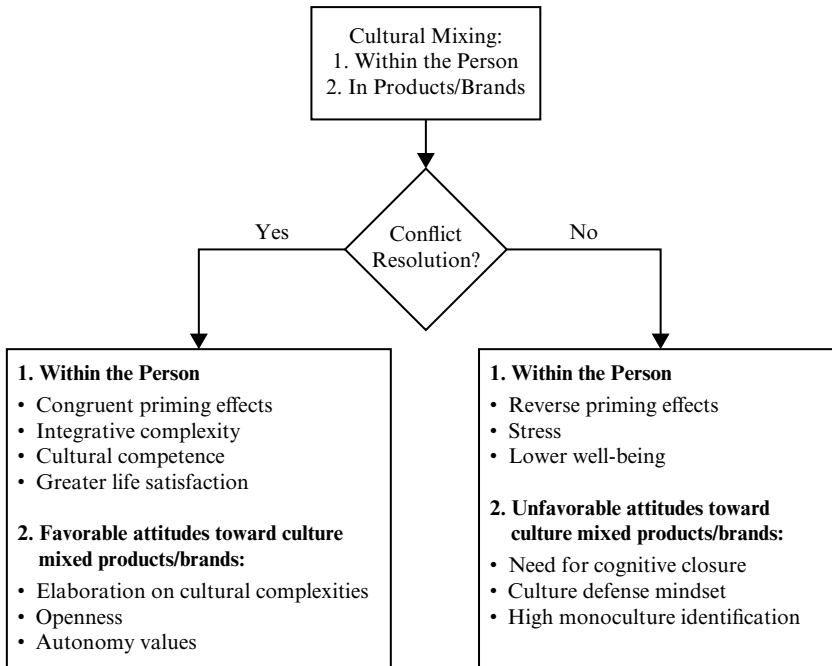


Figure 22.1 Theoretical framework explaining how conflicts between cultural identities predict consumer behavior

consequences for the individual, as well as for their attitudes toward products and brands.

Although the framework just described is a first step for investigating the complexities when navigating cultural identities in a globalized world, several important questions remained unanswered. For instance, what attributes of a product or brand associations in memory are more likely to trigger negative perceptions about culture-mixing? How is knowledge about different cultures acquired and organized in consumers' minds? Would the way in which people organize cultural knowledge in memory influence their consumption behavior?

The norm in today's globalized economy is a global value chain in which manufacturing and brand ownership are spread throughout different countries and cultures. Although past research has demonstrated the country-of-origin effect on product quality judgments (Johansson and Nebenzahl 1986), less is known about how consumers' more subjective feelings toward the cultural meanings in brands influence their attitudes (Torelli and Ahluwalia 2012). How much does information about foreign manufacturing impact the status of a cultural icon? For example, would Apple become less of an American icon to the extent that people pay attention to the concentration of their manufacturing outside of the US? Would a consumer's focus on a global value chain increase perceptions of culture-mixing in consumer products? Future research investigating these issues would provide a more holistic understanding of the drivers of culture-mixing in products.

The harmony and systematic mixing of cultural elements might be another factor that influences people's response to culture-mixed products. Individuals can reduce identity conflict when they achieve harmony among their held identities (Reed et al. 2012). When elements from different cultures are integrated in a systematic and meaningful way, perceived cultural conflict should be minimized. From such harmonious culture-mixing, perceivers should infer a deep understanding of cultural diversity and hence appreciate such creative integration. In contrast, when contrastive cultural elements are put together randomly or superficially, without any inherent connection, culture-mixing should be perceived as awkward or unnatural, and hence be negatively evaluated. Further investigating the structural relation among mixed cultural elements and its impact on brand attitudes seems a fruitful area for future research.

As discussed earlier, the way in which cultural frames are organized in memory can impact the motivations triggered by exposure to cultural primes. For instance, for biculturals who keep their cultural identities as separate and incompatible, cultural cues that prime one cultural identity can be perceived as a threat to the other cultural identity. In response to the

threat, these individuals assimilate their behavior to the non-primed cultural identity as an attempt to affirm this identity (Mok and Morris 2013). Given that people strive to maintain a positive and optimally distinctive identity, when cultural cues bring to mind two contrastive identities (for example, being Hispanic and being American) people might emphasize the one that helps them to achieve positive distinctiveness in a given context, and hence suppress the other. This underscores the importance of further investigating the cognitive and motivational principles governing activation and application of cultural knowledge, and connecting such efforts to understanding identity processes.

In summary, culture-mixing within bicultural individuals, as well as in products and brands, can have positive or negative consequences depending on a variety of factors. Although experiencing conflict between contrastive cultural identities can result in unfavorable consumer attitudes, resolving such conflict can improve consumer well-being and generate favorable brand attitudes. Accordingly, it is critical for future research to further understand the factors and processes that determine integration or conflict between bicultural identities, which can have a powerful impact on well-being in our globalized society where many of us engage in multicultural experiences and desire constructive self-transformation.

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23. Prevalence, antecedents and consequences of actual–desired attitude discrepancies

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Understanding the nature of people's evaluations of products has been a central focus of consumer behavior research since its inception. Consumers evaluate brands and products with some degree of favor or disfavor. For example, some people like Scotch, whereas others dislike it. Research has primarily focused on what we label people's actual attitudes, that is, the attitudes that reflect a person's explicitly and honestly held attitudes toward a target, such as scotch. In some cases, however, people want to hold evaluations other than those they actually hold, something we call desired attitudes. For example, a given person may like Scotch, but wish that they liked it less, perhaps because of its expense or its effects on productivity the next morning. Alternatively, a given person may dislike Scotch, but wish that they liked it more in order to claim an identity that they are a sophisticated person. When people have different actual and desired attitudes, they have what we label actual–desired attitude discrepancies.

Desired attitudes can stem from many different sources, but one source of desired attitudes is people's identities. For example, a Catholic might want to be more negative towards legalized abortion, a Texan might want to like brisket more, and a parent might want to enjoy watching piano recitals more. The wide range of identities that we aspire to, groups with which we align ourselves, and roles we adopt frequently have typical associated attitudes. These attitudes might be explicitly prescribed for members of a group, such as the Catholic above; they might be commonly expected of an identity, such as the Texan above; or they might be related to tasks one must do as part of a role with which one identifies, such as the parent above. Hence, identities can be one among many potential sources of desired attitudes. Although we focus our discussion in this chapter on how actual–desired attitude discrepancies can result from identity constraints, we note that this represents only a subset of such discrepancies. We first discuss desired attitudes, how they are measured and why people may have actual–desired attitude discrepancies. We then discuss consequences of desired attitudes and actual–desired attitude discrepancies.

MEASUREMENT OF DESIRED ATTITUDES

The measurement of actual and desired attitudes follows closely from related work on self-guides (e.g., Higgins 1989). Specifically, participants are instructed that:

Sometimes the attitudes we have are different from the attitudes we ideally would like to have or the attitudes we feel we should hold, and sometimes these attitudes are the same. For your opinion of issue X, please indicate the attitude you **ACTUALLY** have, the attitude you **WOULD LIKE** to have, and the attitude you feel you **SHOULD** or **OUGHT** to have using the separate scales provided.

These instructions are designed both to define the constructs of ideal and ought attitudes for the participants, but also to make clear that people may in many cases not have discrepancies, thereby reducing demand for participants to indicate having discrepancies when they in fact do not. After reading the prompt, participants report their actual, ideal and ought attitudes on standard attitude semantic differential scales, such as those anchored by “negative” and “positive.” Ideal and ought attitudes frequently operate in equivalent ways, and when they do, they are typically averaged to create a “desired” attitude. In other cases, to simplify analyses and computation, participants are simply asked to indicate their “desired” attitude in lieu of reporting ideal and ought attitudes separately. We have operationalized actual–desired attitude discrepancies as the absolute difference between actual attitudes and desired attitudes.

We have also used a branching method to assess actual and desired attitudes. In this method, people initially report their attitudes and are then given a prompt similar to that above, indicating that sometimes people may wish to feel more positively or negatively than they actually do, but other times they may not (see DeMarree et al. 2014 for more detail). They are then asked whether they would like a different attitude, and if so, how much more positively or negatively they would like to feel. The absolute magnitude of this latter value is used as a measure of actual–desired attitude discrepancy. An advantage of this method is that it avoids potential multicollinearity between the desired and actual attitude measures, potential ceiling or floor effects on attitude discrepancies for extremely positive or negative attitudes, and potential issues associated with arbitrary metrics (e.g., Blanton and Jaccard 2006). Preliminary research suggests that this measurement method may be more predictive of downstream outcomes than the self-guides method, though more research is needed to establish whether this finding is robust.

DESIRED ATTITUDES AND THEIR PREVALENCE

Frankfurt (1971) suggests that humans are unique in their ability to reflect on their attitudes and to desire an attitude other than that which they actually hold. As he writes, “Besides wanting and choosing and being moved *to do* this or that, men may also want to have (or not to have) certain desires and motives. They are capable of wanting to be different, in their preferences and purposes, from what they are” (ibid., p. 7). People can know how they feel about a given object and at the same time wish that they felt differently, something we call an actual–desired attitude discrepancy (see also Maio and Thomas 2007). In some cases, discrepancies can come about because the attitudes implied by people’s identities conflict with their genuine evaluations of attitude objects. In other cases, conflicting identities may each suggest different attitudinal responses, even though only one attitude feels like one’s genuine (that is, actual) attitude.

The reader may wonder how common it is that people hold discrepant actual and desired attitudes. We have asked people their actual and desired attitudes about a wide variety of attitude objects, including brands (for example, Wal-Mart, Microsoft), people (for example, Donald Trump, African Americans), behaviors (for example, drinking alcohol, exercising), political issues (for example, abortion, nuclear power), and the self. Though the prevalence of discrepancies in our samples differs across objects, from those with prevalent discrepancies (for example, exam attitudes held by college students, 77 percent) to those with less prevalent discrepancies (for example, attitudes toward nudity, 16 percent), the median discrepancy level we have measured is nearly 50 percent. That is, for a typical attitude object in our studies, nearly half of people want an attitude that is either more positive or negative than the one that they hold.¹

SOURCES OF ACTUAL–DESIRED ATTITUDE DISCREPANCIES

Given the wide prevalence of discrepancies, it is natural to speculate about the basis for discrepancies; that is, given that attitudes are just a mental construct, why don’t people just form the attitudes they want to have? Although research on desired attitudes is in its nascent stages, we speculate

¹ Actual–desired attitude discrepancies should not be confused with Wilson et al.’s (2000) notion of “dual attitudes.” In their formulation, two attitudes (one implicit and one explicit) can coexist and influence behavior under different circumstances. Both actual and desired attitudes, in our formulation, are explicit attitudes.

that constraints posed by the attitude object itself (something we call “reality constraints”) and constraints posed by the surrounding cognitive structures (for example, identities, beliefs, values, and so on; something we call “structural constraints”) can give rise to actual–desired attitude discrepancies.

Reality Constraints

In many cases, the attitude object is as it is, and there is little one can do to change it. If a consumer dislikes some features of a product or the associations of its brand, they are often unable to alter it. Of course, there are some cases in which people can alter the attitude object, or at least their perceptions of it, and doing so may be a particularly effective way to achieve one’s desired attitudes (Lu et al. 2015). For example, many people dislike exercise when they begin exercising, but eventually learn to enjoy it, because they alter the attitude object to make it more pleasing (for example, by exercising with a friend or watching an enjoyable show while on the treadmill), or by altering their sensory experience with the object (for example, through adaptation to difficult exercise or through the release of endorphins), or by learning to perceive it differently (for example, by convincing themselves that the unpleasant physical sensations of exercise are something to take pride in). Absent such alterations in the attitude object or one’s perceptions of it, however, the attitude object as it is fixed, and therefore there are limits to how much actual attitudes can shift. Put another way, if one hates the taste of Marmite or loves the taste of cake, it can be difficult to convince one’s sensory organs otherwise.

Structural Constraints

Structural constraints are constraints imposed by identities, beliefs, values, motivations and attitudes that exist in one’s cognitive structure. For example, classical theories of persuasion emphasize that people like to be consistent in their beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Heider 1946; Festinger 1957). Inconsistencies in one’s cognitive representations can create discomfort and tension. People may attempt to reduce inconsistencies, but they are constrained by the general structure of the network. That is, because attitudes exist in a large network of interrelated evaluation-relevant content, it may sometimes be impossible to reconcile all of the elements in a harmonious way. When the content in the existing evaluative structure implies conflicting evaluations, or when the network imposes a desired attitude that is inconsistent with the properties of the attitude object, it can create actual–desired attitude discrepancies.

For example, imagine that a cheese-loving consumer who highly values animal welfare encounters a bad-tasting vegan cheese. In this case, the combined identities of “cheese lover” and “animal rights advocate” could create a positive desired attitude toward the cheese. However, the undeniably bad taste of the cheese (that is, the reality constraint) could prevent the consumer from generating an actual attitude that matches the desired attitude. Hence, one’s identities, values, beliefs and motivations can create desires to like or dislike an attitude target, but these constructs and the properties of the target (or at least, one’s perceptions of it) can prevent the actual attitude from matching the desired attitude.

In other cases, discrepancies can result solely from structural constraints, such as when different identities have conflicting attitudinal implications. For example, a liberal Catholic’s political and religious identities could provide competing constraints for more favorable (liberal) and more unfavorable (Catholic) attitudes towards legalized abortion. No matter what attitude this person actually holds, one of their identities could lead them to want a different attitude. A person’s actual and desired attitudes both exist in relationship to a variety of constraints, and so one reason people might fail to close these discrepancies is that doing so would necessitate creating other imbalances or discrepancies.

PREDICTION OF EVALUATIVE RESPONSES

The utility of the desired attitude construct can be found in the extent to which it can predict variance in evaluative responses above and beyond that accounted for by people’s actual attitudes. Perhaps the most widely studied evaluative response concerns people’s actual behavior and choices. Prior research has shown that people’s attitudes can sometimes predict their behavior. For example, one’s attitudes toward political candidates are highly predictive of eventual voting (e.g., Fishbein and Coombs 1974). Of course, attitudes vary in the extent to which they predict behavior, and some of this variation is accounted for by things such as correspondence between the measured attitude and the subsequent behavior (e.g., Ajzen and Fishbein 1977) and the strength of the attitude itself (e.g., Petty and Krosnick 1995). However, even under optimal conditions, there is still unexplained variance, and some of this variance could plausibly be attributed to desired attitudes.

To test this idea, we ran experiments assessing whether desired attitudes could predict behavioral intentions and actual behavior beyond actual attitudes. In one study (DeMarree et al. 2017, study 1), participants indicated their actual, ought and ideal attitudes toward McDonald’s. They then

indicated their intentions to eat at McDonald's over the next month. In a simultaneous regression, actual attitudes significantly predicted behavioral intentions, but so too did ideal attitudes. Research shows that desired attitudes can sometimes predict behavior even better than actual attitudes (e.g., DeMarree et al. 2017, study 2), though the unique variance explained by desired attitudes varies across samples, attitude objects and outcomes. Other labs have also shown unique prediction by desired attitudes, and these effects appear more likely to emerge when people are in a relatively abstract mindset (Carrera et al. 2017).

Of course, people's behavioral intentions may not reflect their actual behavior, and given that behavioral intentions can sometimes reflect social desirability or people's naïve beliefs about how they will behave, it could be that people just inflated their behavioral intentions to more closely approximate their desired attitudes. To examine this, in another study, we examined whether people's desired attitudes would predict their actual behavior (that is, coffee consumption). We additionally examined whether people would alter the attitude object, as described above, so as to facilitate behaving in line with their desired attitudes.²

In this study (DeMarree et al. 2017, study 4), we told participants that they would be evaluating a brand of coffee. They were then shown a page with pictures and descriptions of various additives (that is, natural and artificial sweeteners, and dairy and non-dairy creamers) and asked to indicate how many of each type of additive they would like added to their coffee before tasting it. While the experimenter prepared the coffee (standardized using a Keurig machine), participants reported their actual and desired attitudes toward drinking coffee. We also asked how committed participants were to pursuing their actual and desired attitudes, with the expectation that each type of attitude would be particularly predictive among those participants who were highly committed. While participants completed the questionnaire (and filler questionnaires to take up time as participants consumed their coffee), they were given the coffee prepared with their requested additives. Last, participants evaluated the coffee, to maintain consistency with the cover story.

We first examined the number of additives participants asked to have added to the coffee before they drank it. Not surprisingly, the more people actually liked coffee the fewer additives they requested. By contrast, the more participants desired to like coffee the more additives they requested,

² Although we did not specifically examine identity in this study, positive desired attitudes toward coffee could stem from identity motivations. If so, drinking more coffee and using additives to make it more appealing would be consistent with the idea of identity reinforcement (Reed and Forehand 2016).

particularly if they were committed to their desired attitude. This is in line with the idea that those who actually like coffee do not feel the need to modify the attitude object, but those who want to like coffee more than they do will modify the coffee in such a way as to make it more palatable to them. At the end of the study, the amount of coffee participants consumed was assessed. The predicted desired attitude $\times$ commitment interaction was marginally significant, such that among those people who were committed to their desired attitude, wanting to like coffee more predicted increased consumption of the coffee. This study suggests that wanting to like something more can lead people to modify that attitude object to make it more appealing to them and make them more likely to engage in behavior consistent with actually liking it (a potential “fake it until you make it” strategy).

Another type of classic finding in the attitudes literature is that attitudes predict various information processing tendencies. Specifically, people often seek and process information in ways that promote maintenance of their current attitude, such as exposing themselves more to attitude-consistent information (Frey 1986) and evaluating attitude-consistent information more favorably (Lord et al. 1979). The framework presented here suggests that people may sometimes process information in ways that support their desired attitude, even at the expense of their actual attitudes. That is, because actual and desired attitudes can differ, desired attitudes might predict biased information processing above and beyond that of actual attitudes. To test this idea, we took classic paradigms from the attitudes literature and tested whether desired attitudes could predict those findings over actual attitudes.

In one experiment (DeMarree et al. 2017, study 3), we used a biased information evaluation paradigm (Lord et al. 1979) in which participants are provided with conflicting attitude-relevant information to assess whether people evaluate attitude-consistent information more favorably. Specifically, in this study, participants indicated their actual and desired attitudes toward the death penalty (as well as their commitment to their desired attitude) before reading about ostensibly real (but fictional) studies regarding the efficacy of the death penalty in reducing crime. Participants then indicated how well-conducted and convincing they found each study. Results indicated that as people desired to have a pro-death penalty attitude more, they evaluated the study supporting the efficacy of the death penalty as more convincing, particularly when they were committed to their desired attitude. In fact, as commitment to their desired attitudes increased, participants demonstrated a non-significant tendency to find more compelling information inconsistent with their actual attitude. Although preliminary, this shows an intriguing pattern whereby, when

highly committed to their desired attitude, people will actively undermine their actual attitude in order to bring it more in line with their desired attitude. Given that death penalty attitudes are often related to people's political identities, it is easy to imagine how these processes could occur in the service of people's actual or desired political identities.

DOWNSTREAM CONSEQUENCES

Whereas previous research had focused on the extent to which people's actual attitudes guide behavior and information processing, the studies we have just described demonstrate that people's desired attitudes can predict these outcomes as well. When actual and desired attitudes are congruent, this will typically result in actual and desired attitudes pushing people's responses in the same direction (for example, towards purchase or consumption of a product, towards a particular interpretation of a candidate's message, and so on). However, as the discrepancy between one's actual and desired attitudes increases, these could predict conflicting evaluative responses. If a person's actual attitude towards eating broccoli is negative but their desired attitude is positive, they could simultaneously experience behavioral tendencies to eat and to reject a plate of broccoli. These conflicting reactions could lead the person in question to experience a state of subjective ambivalence.

Subjective ambivalence refers to the psychological experience of conflict, indecision and mixed feelings toward an attitude object (Priester and Petty 1996). Subjective ambivalence can lead people to rely less on their ambivalent attitudes as a guide to behavior, to attempt to reduce the ambivalence (for example, by seeking additional attitude-relevant information), and to change their attitudes more readily (for a review, see van Harreveld et al. 2015).

Subjective ambivalence has been hypothesized to result from objective ambivalence (Priester and Petty 1996; Thompson et al. 1995). Objective ambivalence refers to holding both positive and negative thoughts and feelings toward an attitude object. For example, someone might believe that a car has both positive features (for example, it looks good and gets good gas mileage) and negative features (for example, it has poor safety ratings and slow acceleration) at the same time. Hence, whereas subjective ambivalence refers to the experience or feeling of evaluative conflict, objective ambivalence refers to the mere presence of conflicting (that is, both positive and negative) attitude object-relevant information in memory. Although objective and subjective ambivalence are clearly related, they are not identical constructs. For example, if a person has mixed information

about an attitude object, that conflicting information might not create the subjective experience of conflict if both positive and negative information are not simultaneously accessible (Newby-Clark et al. 2002).

There are other potential predictors of evaluative conflict besides believing an attitude object has both positive and negative features, however. For example, if someone's attitude differs from the attitude of a close other, they may feel conflicted in their attitude (Priester and Petty 2001). Additionally, as suggested above, the conflicting pull that discrepant actual and desired attitudes exert on people's evaluative responses could be another predictor of subjective ambivalence.

We have explored this new potential source of subjective ambivalence in a large number of published (DeMarree et al. 2014) and unpublished studies and have found remarkably consistent support for this hypothesis. In a typical study, participants report their actual and desired attitudes towards one or more attitude objects as well as their objective and subjective ambivalence towards the same objects. Across a wide range of issues, including brands (for example, Walmart, Microsoft), political issues (for example, abortion, gay marriage), politicians (for example, Hillary Clinton, John McCain), and health behaviors (for example, using condoms, eating broccoli), we have found that people experience more subjective ambivalence when their actual and desired attitudes are discrepant. That is, actual–desired attitude discrepancies maximize ambivalence when people's actual and desired attitudes are maximally distinct, such as when someone's actual attitude is of one valence (for example, relatively negative towards a politician) and their desired attitude is of a different valence (for example, relatively positive towards the politician).

The above results – more discrepant participants reporting higher levels of subjective ambivalence – held after controlling for objective ambivalence. That is, actual–desired attitude discrepancies are not reducible to one's separate positive and negative reactions towards an object. As a hypothetical example, one could primarily dislike the city where one lives and have many more negative than positive feelings about it, but still desire to like it more. This desire to like it more does not indicate that one actually has lots of positive feelings, but rather that one wants to have positive feelings.

In addition, we have also demonstrated that actual–desired attitude discrepancies can predict subjective ambivalence above and beyond interpersonal sources of ambivalence as well. In the relevant study (DeMarree et al. 2014, study 3), participants reported on the same measures described above with respect to practicing safe sex. In this study, however, they also reported the attitude that their current or most recent romantic partner had towards the issue. Obviously, disagreeing with one's romantic partner

in the evaluation of safe-sex practices is a potential source of interpersonal conflict, but it is also a potential source of intra-psycho conflict (that is, subjective ambivalence). Congruent with previous research on interpersonal ambivalence (Priester and Petty 2001), we found that discrepancies between one's own and one's partner's attitudes predicted feelings of subjective ambivalence, as did objective ambivalence. Critically, however, discrepancies between one's actual and desired attitudes significantly predicted subjective ambivalence over these influences.

Most of the studies examining actual–desired attitude discrepancies have been correlational, which raises questions concerning the direction of causality. For example, it is possible that someone's experience of subjective ambivalence could lead them to want a different attitude – one that is unambivalent (cf. van Harreveld et al. 2009). However, at least two studies have manipulated participants' actual–desired attitude discrepancies to establish the causal priority of actual–desired attitude discrepancies in predicting subjective ambivalence (DeMarree et al. 2014, study 4; DeMarree and Rios 2014; study 3). In these studies, after reporting their initial attitudes, participants were provided with false feedback indicating that either their current attitude was desirable (low discrepancy condition) or an attitude of the opposite valence was desirable (high discrepancy condition). Experimentally manipulated discrepancies predicted subjective ambivalence, offering support for a causal role of actual–desired attitude discrepancies. Note that although these findings provide evidence that discrepancies can cause subjective ambivalence, this does not rule out that the reverse causal path could also operate under some circumstances.

As noted above, understanding the antecedents of subjective ambivalence is important because ambivalent attitudes are thought to be less useful guides to action and may elicit attempts to resolve the ambivalence. We have conducted several initial studies that have examined these potential consequences of actual–desired attitude discrepancies. For example, in one study (DeMarree et al. 2014, study 5), we found that attitudes toward exercising predicted behavior less strongly among people who had actual–desired attitude discrepancies compared with people who reported actual–desired attitude congruence. Further, this effect held when controlling for the moderating role that objective ambivalence also had, and both of these effects were mediated by subjective ambivalence. That is, actual–desired attitude discrepancies on the topic of exercising led people to feel conflicted in their attitude towards exercising, which led their attitude to be less predictive of exercising intentions. In another study (DeMarree et al. 2014, study 6), we instead examined people's interest in information that could help to resolve their ambivalence. Congruent with predictions, we

found that actual–desired discrepancies predicted subjective ambivalence, which in turn predicted increased interest in attitude-relevant information.

The amount of subjective evaluative conflict stemming from actual–desired attitude discrepancies could depend on the salience of their constituent components. For example, when identities create actual–desired attitude discrepancies, the resulting subjective ambivalence could depend on the salience of those identities, an idea consistent with the identity conflict principle (Reed et al. 2012). To illustrate, if a liberal Catholic is generally in favor of legalized abortion, they may only experience conflict when their religious identity is currently accessible. If they only occasionally attend mass, then they may go through life with relatively few instances of conflict from the desired attitude that their religion might prescribe. However, if their religious identity is more frequently activated (for example, from regular attendance at mass), a negative desired attitude towards legalized abortion could enter their mind more frequently and ultimately be the attitude to which they become more committed.

RELATIONSHIPS TO OTHER CONSTRUCTS

As should be clear, desired attitudes affect a wide range of attitude-relevant processes. They predict people's evaluative responses, including their information processing and behavior. Because of this, when people's actual attitudes are discrepant from their desired attitudes, the conflicting pulls that each play on people's evaluative responses leads people to feel conflicted in their attitude. Further, the resultant experience of conflict is consequential, predicting reduced attitude–behavior correspondence and increased information interest. One might wonder, however, whether these are truly effects of “desired attitudes” or whether these effects might already be captured by existing constructs in the literature.

For example, the work on desired attitudes guiding behavior and information processing shares similarities to work on motivated reasoning. However, in work on motivated reasoning, people often wish for a belief or a reality to be a particular way (for example, to believe that one is healthy or intelligent; for example, Ditto and Lopez 1992), whereas in our work people often wish to evaluate an attitude object a particular way. For example, imagine a person who wants to become a doctor, but who gets a grade C in their organic chemistry class. Traditional motivated reasoning processes would predict that the person would deny the validity of the grade (for example, the professor was incompetent) and deny the importance of the grade (for example, I can still get into medical school with one bad grade) in the service of pursuing the doctor identity.

However, our work might instead focus on how people might try to shift their evaluations, potentially of those activities that would support the existing goal (for example, wanting to like studying more, to foster future success in their coursework) or of the relevant end states themselves (for example, wanting to evaluate being a doctor less favorably, and being an accountant more favorably). The former would allow people to continue to pursue their initial emerging identity (that is, doctor), whereas the latter would actually involve a potential shift in the identities that a person is attempting to develop.

This brings us to another related literature: goal pursuit. As seen in the example above, some desired attitudes can arise because people have goals (for example, identity goals), and goals frequently imply aiming to change from one's current state. Because evaluations are often relevant to goal pursuit, goals could give rise to desired attitudes. For example, people might desire to like goal-facilitating objects more than they do, such as when a dieter tries to develop a taste for salads. Successful goal pursuit can sometimes be indicated by success in making one's actual attitudes congruent with one's goals (for example, Ferguson 2008). Viewed through another lens, a desired attitude could itself be viewed as a goal. This is because discrepant desired attitudes create the motivation to reduce the actual–desired attitude discrepancy, as described above.

Last, the studies described above show that actual–desired attitude discrepancies are related to ambivalence. Given this relationship, it is reasonable to wonder whether some version of objective ambivalence could actually capture people's desired attitudes. In our studies, we have consistently shown that actual–desired attitude discrepancies significantly account for variance in outcomes beyond that of objective ambivalence. Nevertheless, because objective ambivalence represents a type of evaluative inconsistency, it has some conceptual overlap with actual–desired attitude discrepancies. One key difference is that ambivalence is about evaluative conflict within an attitude object (for example, believing a target has both pros and cons), whereas actual–desired attitude discrepancies reflect conflict between two attitudes. For example, a person who is trying an unfamiliar restaurant for the first time may initially have a relatively neutral attitude toward the restaurant (because they have not yet tried it or heard much about it) but may desire a very positive attitude. This type of inconsistency is not the result of ambivalence, but rather a difference between an unambivalent actual attitude and an unambivalent desired attitude. Hence, the desire for a different attitude need not be caused by intra-attitudinal conflict (that is, ambivalence). Of course, as noted above, ambivalence could under some circumstances lead to specific desired attitudes (for example, a person who has mixed feelings may prefer to be

unambivalently positive or negative), but in other cases it may not (for example, among people who have low preference for consistency, Cialdini et al. 1995; or among people actively cultivating ambivalent attitudes, Reich and Wheeler 2016).

CONCLUSION

The properties of an attitude object, the physiological and psychological make-up of the individual, their values, beliefs, and roles and identities, all create forces that shape how people evaluate targets. These forces result in an actual evaluation – how the person truly views the target with favor or disfavor – but also frequently cause desired evaluations that can differ and cause evaluative conflict. Whether related to goal pursuit, acquired tastes, guilty pleasures, or one's roles and identities, people often desire to evaluate things differently from how they actually do. Understanding this uniquely human capacity has the potential to add significantly to our ability to predict people's behavior from their attitudes, as well as to provide a substantially richer understanding of the formation and change of evaluations.

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PART V

THE IDENTITY RELEVANCE PRINCIPLE

24. Religious identity in marketing

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INTRODUCTION

To lay a foundation for the role of religious identity in marketing, we must first define religious identity and differentiate it from other identities. Religious identity has two dimensions: association with a religious group (religious affiliation), and strength of connection to religion (religiosity; Cohen et al. 2006). Several characteristics of religious identity help to distinguish it from other identity types. First, it is a group referent identity, according to the taxonomic categorization of identities (see Reed et al. 2012), because it is based on affiliation with a large social collective. Second, it is a relatively stable identity, as opposed to a more transient one, meaning that people do not often, or with much ease, move away from or between religious identities. Finally, it is intimately linked to a specific set of dimensions: beliefs, values, rituals and community (Mathras et al. 2016).

Like any identity, a religious identity helps to guide and regulate consumer decision processes. Religious identity may be relevant to some consumer choices more than to others. One's Catholic identity may help one choose between certain foods during Lent (a 40-day period of personal sacrifice prior to Easter), but may provide little assistance in choosing between consumer electronics. However, there are many product and service categories for which religion and religiosity are quite relevant, such as clothing (for example, choosing to dress modestly) and home decor (for example, choosing to display a nativity scene versus a menorah). Furthermore, these choices may depend on the extent to which consumers wish to achieve their personal goals (goal relevance) and/or to display their religious identities to others (symbolic relevance). Therefore, the role of religious identity in marketing and consumer choice is highly related to the identity relevance principle, which states that "when identity information is deliberately processed, its influence will be greatest on stimuli that possess object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance, action relevance or evaluation relevance to the identity" (Reed et al. 2012, p. 316).

In this chapter, we discuss the relationship between religious identity and consumer behavior. We propose that religious affiliation and religiosity

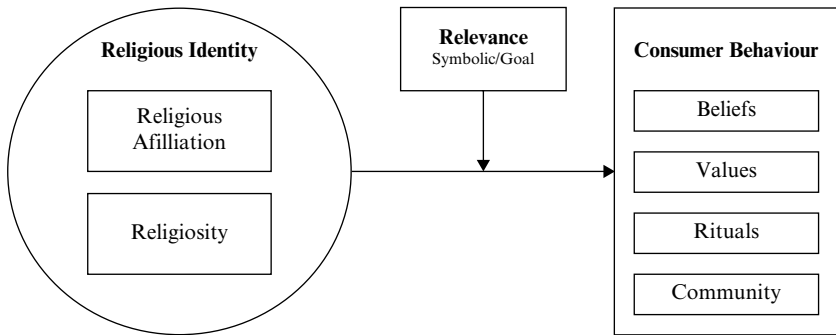


Figure 24.1 Conceptual model of the role of religious identity in consumer behavior

exert influences on consumer behavior in the form of the four dimensions of religion: beliefs, values, rituals and communities. We further propose that this set of links is moderated by identity relevance (either symbolic or goal-oriented), such that identity will exert this influence more so in consumer domains that are relevant to the religious identity (see Figure 24.1).

Religious Affiliation and Consumer Behavior

Like any social identity that is based on group or cultural membership, religious affiliations are closely tied to specific group membership and community ties (Cohen et al. 2005). As such, religious identity is group referent, as opposed to abstracted referent or individual referent (Reed et al. 2012).

Religious identities are grounded in a very specific religious culture with doctrines, sets of principles and standards for expected behavior (Cohen 2009, 2015). For example, a consumer who is Protestant possesses a different religious identity than one who is Catholic. Furthermore, the various features that make each religion unique become manifest in adherents' thinking and behavior, including their consumption of goods and services. For example, because American Jews differ from other United States ethnic groups in terms of demographics (for example, socio-economic status) and values (for example, need for achievement), they demonstrate higher levels of information-seeking, product innovativeness and word-of-mouth sharing (Hirschman 1981). Furthermore, correlational research suggests that Catholic consumers are more likely to be influenced by price, location, transportation and mood in making entertainment-related choices than are Protestant consumers (Hirschman 1982).

Reed et al. (2012) point out that an identity category label (for example,

Mormon) is just a label. Only when the person begins the process of incorporating that label into their sense of self, and making moves to become that person, does it become an identity. Not all members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints necessarily possess a strong Mormon identity. Conversely, one need not necessarily be indoctrinated into the Mormon faith to possess a Mormon identity. The Catholic spouse of a Mormon might, through exposure, develop a Mormon identity that becomes quite influential in consumer choice. This Mormon identity may equal or surpass the original Catholic identity in the degree to which it is “central” to the person. This would likely depend, among other things, on the initial strength or centrality of the Catholic identity, and the degree to which the two religious identities conflict with or complement one another in meaningful ways.

Religiosity and Consumer Behavior

Religiosity is related to the notion of identity salience or centrality in identity theory (Stryker, 1968, 1987). Identity salience or centrality determines the likelihood of a person to act on an identity. For example, the Buddhist identity of a high (versus low) religiosity Buddhist should be more chronically salient, and thus likely to influence consumer thought processes. Importantly, any intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including number and centrality of other identities, may also influence behavior. Religious identity is just one of many identities simultaneously held in a person’s self-concept (Reed and Forehand 2016).

A number of researchers have used religion primes to test the effects of a temporarily salient religious identity on perception, cognition and behavior (Shariff et al. 2016). Consumers who have a high (versus low) level of religious identity salience are better able to resist temptations (Laurin et al. 2012); are more forgiving (Schumann et al. 2014), particularly of service failures (Hyodo and Bolton 2018); and are more risk-seeking in non-moral domains such as skydiving (Kupor et al. 2015). They are also less susceptible to fear appeals in advertising, because God primes also activate beliefs that God is a source for coping with negative events and emotions (Wu and Cutright 2018).

Furthermore, there is a burgeoning literature demonstrating that consumers who have low levels of religiosity may use consumerism to fill in the gap. For example, Shachar et al. (2011) demonstrated a negative correlation between an individual’s religiosity and their reliance on branded products as a means of self-expression. In addition, worshipping the cult of Macintosh (Belk and Tumbat 2005) or the environmental “prophet” Al Gore (Rubin 2010) may substitute more traditional religious functions,

whereas participating in a brand community such as the Harley Owners Group may satisfy individuals' need for religious affiliation (Muñiz and Schau 2005).

Dimensions of Religious Consumer Behavior

Drawing on Saroglou (2011), Mathras et al. (2016) proposed that religion, and ultimately its relationship with consumer choice, can be understood via four dimensions: beliefs, values, rituals and community. These dimensions of religion are a useful taxonomy in developing an appropriately nuanced understanding of religious identity and marketing. We will briefly introduce each dimension here, and we will expand on them in our discussion the role of identity relevance in this process.

Beliefs are ideas or concepts that people within a given religion generally hold to be true (Saroglou 2011). Religious beliefs may include a transcendent God, existence of supernatural agents, and divine principles which help individuals seeking truths (Park 2005). Catholics, for example, hold beliefs about the existence of Heaven and Hell, original sin and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Buddhists hold beliefs about the impermanence of reality and the absence of a discrete personal self (Harris 1998). Religious beliefs often guide purchases. For example, belief in the principles of Judaism might make one more likely to own and wear a Star of David.

Some research has focused on the effect of beliefs about death, mortality and the afterlife. For example, many people believe that they will live on in a literal or symbolic afterlife. One means to attain immortality is to closely follow the tenets and values of one's religious affiliation. However, an alternative means to achieve symbolic immortality is via the acquisition of material possessions, such as high-status products (Hirschman 1990). That is, people feel that they will, in a sense, live on forever through their accrued wealth and material possessions, which can be passed on to heirs. Consistent with this notion, when consumers receive a reminder of their imminent mortality, they desire high-status brands in order to cope with that threat (for example, Rolex or Lexus) (Heine et al. 2002; Mandel and Heine 1999).

Values are guiding principles that people hold to be important. They provide followers with guidance regarding a wide variety of religiously relevant issues (Saroglou 2011). Religions guide the formation and adherence to many values that are directly relevant to consumer outcomes, including self-control, economic savviness (Sood and Nasu 1995) and altruism (Graham and Haidt 2010). Examples of the influence of religious values on consumer behavior include Jewish *kosher* laws (Klein 1979) and the Islamic *sharia* moral code, which distinguish between permissible and prohibited products (Alserhan 2010). For example, frugality and financial

prudence (which is valued across many religions) causes religious consumers to spend less money on groceries and make fewer impulsive purchases than non-religious consumers (Kurt et al. 2018).

Rituals are repeated behaviors of symbolic meaning that typically follow a formal script (Rook 1985). In the context of religion, rituals include public and private prayer, Holy Communion in Catholicism, Passover in Judaism, and the *hadj* pilgrimage in Islam (Mathras et al. 2016). Examples of the influence of religious rituals on consumer behavior may fit into categories such as prayer or cleansing rituals (for example, confession as a symbolic cleansing of sins). For example, the purchase of a rosary allows a Catholic to engage in prayer rituals. Recent research has found that after making “green confession” (that is, a religious admittance of a sin against the environment), one is more likely to consume in an environmentally friendly manner (Mathras et al. 2018).

Community helps to foster a person’s sense of belongingness, group identity and collective self-esteem (Greenfield and Marks 2007). Religious communities often provide a strong source of social support (Saroglou 2011). Communities can also have powerful effects on consumer behavior. Mead et al. (2011) found that after experiencing a threat to belongingness, consumers chose products aimed at signaling that they still belonged to the group. Perhaps a Christian who feels less accepted by the church than would be ideal might attach an ichthys (fish symbol) to the back of their car to symbolize belonging to the social group. Next, we will propose that identity relevance acts a moderator in the relationship between religious identity and consumer behavior, such that religious identity only exerts an influence in domains where religion identity is relevant.

THE RELEVANCE OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY TO CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

The relevance principle of identity states that “the influence of deliberately processed identity information depends directly on the applicability of the identity to the domain of evaluation and the degree to which identity-related information allows discrimination between options” (Reed et al. 2012, p.315). This principle implies that the religious identity of consumers will influence product choice and consumption only in certain circumstances. One’s religion may have much to say about certain domains of life and living, and very little to say about other domains. Therefore, regardless of the strength or centrality of one’s religious identity relative to other identities, certain consumer choice domains may be entirely irrelevant to that religious identity, and thus will fail to influence decisions.

Religions often have much to say about what foods are acceptable and not acceptable, in general and during specific holy periods such as Lent, Passover and Ramadan (Johnson et al. 2011). Clothing and entertainment are two additional product domains where one's religious identity should be quite relevant across all major religions. For example, many religious consumers strive to dress modestly and to avoid media products that are sacrilegious or inconsistent with the moral domain of purity (Shweder et al. 1997). Of course, there are some consumer domains where religious identity is unlikely to be relevant, and many more where it is relevant only for certain religions (for example, a Mormon might abstain from drinking coffee or tea, which might be fully permissible to a Jew or a Hindu).

What determines the circumstances under which one's religious identity predicts one's choices and behavior? All five subtypes of identity relevance (that is, object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance, action relevance and evaluation relevance) (Reed et al. 2012) may determine the strength of the link between religious identity and consumer behavior. However, perhaps two stand out as being especially pertinent: goal relevance and symbolic relevance. Building on the notion of motive-driven materialism (see Shrum et al. 2013), symbolic relevance might provide a generally more extrinsic motive to consume religious products (for example, signaling in-group loyalty to others), and goal relevance a generally more intrinsic motive (for example, getting closer to God). Importantly, in many circumstances either or both of these subtypes of relevance can be the driving force behind consumption of the same product (Table 24.1).

Symbolic Relevance

Symbolic relevance exists when one reinforces one's identity to others through possession of an object (Reed et al. 2012). The notion of symbolic relevance is similar to the notion of signaling in consumer behavior research (e.g., Berger and Heath 2007). Specifically, consumers may choose products that symbolize or signal to others their religious affiliation and devotion. For example, a devout Muslim might express to the world the existence and strength of his Muslim identity by growing a beard, or by boycotting "infidel" brands such as Nestlé, McDonald's and Coca-Cola (Izberk-Bilgin 2012, p. 664). Further, a Muslim athlete might jointly signal her religious and athlete identities by wearing a Nike-branded *hijab* during competition (Young 2017). Thus, the extent to which consumers draw on their religious identities to determine their brand choices might depend on the perceived extent to which these choices will successfully signal their group membership to others.

Research on signaling and consumer behavior highlights several perti-

Table 24.1 *Religious identity-symbolic and goal relevance to products for each dimension of religion*

	Beliefs	Rituals	Values	Community
Product	Jewish Star of David	Catholic rosary	Muslim <i>hijab</i>	Christian ichthys (fish icon)
Symbolic relevance	Symbolizes that one possesses Jewish beliefs	Symbolizes Christian devotion, specifically that one engages in prayer rituals	Symbolizes that one espouses Muslim values of modesty and religious devotion	Symbolizes that one is part of the Christian community
Goal relevance	Helps one achieve the goal of becoming closer to God	Helps one achieve the goal of repentance and cleansing of sins	Helps one achieve the goal of attracting a high-quality (religiously devout) mate	Helps one achieve the goal of building a coalition of friendship or cultural in-group

Note: The religious products mentioned in this table are examples of religious relevance to consumer behavior according to each of the four dimensions of religion. Symbolic and goal relevance are two different ways in which each are relevant. Importantly, while symbolic relevance and goal relevance can be thought of as extrinsic and intrinsic motivations to consume, respectively, there may be elements of both symbolic and goal relevance in many consumer decisions.

nent findings. While the most common example of symbolic consumption might be signaling to one's own in-group that one is a loyal in-group member (Mead et al. 2011), this is not the only example of symbolic relevance. Sometimes people choose not to consume certain products, in an effort to avoid being identified as a member of a particular undesired group (Berger and Heath 2007). Further, people sometimes choose a product that will signal group membership, but that also signals differentiation in some way from the larger group (Chan et al. 2012). In the context of religious identity, an example might be a Muslim woman who chooses to simultaneously signal her Muslim value of modesty and satisfy her personal desire to be unique by wearing a bright gold *hijab*.

Relatedly, product choice can sometimes indicate status and competence through signals of non-conformity (Bellezza et al. 2013). When one's religious identity is otherwise known by the group or the surrounding population, choosing to avoid symbols of religious identity (for example,

choosing not to wear traditional Muslim clothing), or deliberately departing from the norm, might be a status move; furthermore, men might be more apt to follow this strategy than women (Griskevicius et al. 2006).

Berger and Ward (2010) found a U-shaped relationship between product price and brand logos, such that the most expensive and the least expensive products have the most subtle brand marking (or none at all). An interpretation of this phenomenon is that when people want to display their identity to the whole world, they choose products that are easily recognizable; but when they want to display only to their in-group, they choose more subtle products. Perhaps this phenomenon is true in the realm of religious consumption as well. For example, wearing a Jewish star necklace might be a signal that one is Jewish that is perceptible to anyone, whereas more subtle signals, such as wearing a *chai* necklace, might only convey information to fellow in-group members. The Jewish rules and traditions of *kashrut* are another such example: they are so complex that one's non-Jewish colleagues might not know whether one is adhering or not. Another example could be using certain phrases that are only recognizable to co-religionists, such as when Mitt Romney slipped the phrase "choose the right" into his presidential campaign to appeal to other Mormons, but many non-Mormons did not know this was a religiously inspired phrase.

Goal Relevance

Goal relevance exists when a belief or behavior is associated with an outcome that is important to one's identity (Reed et al. 2012). Religious identity influences consumer choice via goal relevance when people choose products that are consistent with the goals or desired outcomes associated with their religion. Goal relevance represents an intrinsic motivation to consume.

The literature on religion and consumer behavior is full of examples of religious goal-relevant consumer behavior. For example, consumers high in religiosity are more likely than those low in religiosity to donate their time and material resources (Peifer 2007) and to donate blood (Burnett 1981), due to their prosocial values. Mormons who are intrinsically motivated are far more likely to volunteer than members of other religions (Johnson et al. 2013). Such anti-materialistic behaviors might provide religious adherents with a degree of intrinsic satisfaction, and might help them to achieve certain intrinsic religious goals, such as increasing their spirituality, serving a penance, cleansing themselves of prior wrongdoing or strengthening their bond with God.

As another example, researchers have found that people who were

exposed to a religious prime (versus control) displayed a higher level of magnanimity (a religious ideal), but only when they perceived their religious ideals to be under threat (a relevant goal) (Schumann et al. 2014). Furthermore, a recent meta-analysis suggests that making consumers' religious identities more salient increases prosocial behavior; but not among atheists, for whom prosociality may not be viewed as either related to or relevant to their religious identity (Shariff et al. 2016).

Relevance in Conjunction with Other Identity Principles

While relevance may be the most appropriate identity principle for determining the strength of the influence of religious identity on consumer behavior, it is not the only one. We will discuss two here that are each related to identity relevance (and to one another): identity verification and identity conflict. While these two principles are somewhat tangential to the main focus of this chapter, they may relate to religious consumer behavior.

The identity verification principle states that people will seek feedback from the environment about the degree to which their behavior is consistent with their internal representations of themselves (Reed et al. 2012; Swann 1983). Religious consumers, therefore, might seek out products that will reinforce, or verify, their religious identity, to avoid the emotional turmoil that accompanies a discrepancy between the actual self (for example, the gambler) and the ideal self (for example, the devout Christian). This example represents a non-trivial struggle, because religious cultures and traditions often convey multiple messages on any given viewpoint: does a Christian adhere to "an eye for an eye," or "let he who is without sin cast the first stone?" Often, cultural elites help to arbitrate these issues, such as when Republican elites tell the masses in the United States that Republicans ought to be against abortion, but for the death penalty (Malka et al. 2012).

The conflict principle of identity formation and expression states that individuals are motivated to reduce conflict between multiple identities, and they will accomplish this goal by managing the relative salience of conflicting identities (Burke 1991; Stryker and Burke 2000). A woman who was raised Jewish but who has converted to Catholicism for her husband will, to some degree, have both a Jewish and a Catholic identity. While holiday shopping – a consumer scenario in which both Jewish and Catholic identities are relevant – she will need to manage the relative salience of those two conflicting identities (for example, prioritize Catholicism) so that her actions as a consumer (purchasing a Christmas tree) are consistent with the most salient identity.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

We have discussed the role of religious identity (including religious affiliation and religiosity) in consumer behavior via the relevance principle for identity formation and expression. We used a four-dimension (beliefs, values, rituals and community) framework to provide clear, dimension-specific examples of how religious identity influences consumer behavior. We showed that religious identity is an important factor in consumer behavior, but only in situations and product categories where that identity is relevant.

One important issue for future research is interactions between multiple identities, and between identity and culture. There is a recognized need for identity researchers to consider the self as a complex and dynamic system, containing many identities that may conflict with or complement one another to varying degrees in different consumer circumstances (Reed and Forehand 2016). Not only is it possible for people to possess more than one religious identity (for example, Catholic and Jewish), but also people possess many identities linked to many social and cultural roles of various types (for example, Jewish, Californian, American, hipster, and so on). How do these various identities interact with religion in consumer scenarios? For example, there may be some important cultural (country) differences in the extent to which religiosity impacts consumer behavior (that is, country X religion interactions). For example, Sood and Nasu (1995) found that important cultural differences exist in the extent to which religiosity impacts frugality and impulsivity in shopping behavior. An additional, contextual kind of interaction to consider is how religious identities play out in interpersonal relationships and social groups (for example, workplace groups) when people have different religious identities.

Importantly, several of these proposed interactions incorporate additional principles of identity that researchers should be aware of, such as identity verification and identity conflict. Understanding the influence of religious identity on consumer behavior depends on the broader context of all of the principles of identity formation and expression working together. We hope that this chapter provides a deeper appreciation for religious identities as factors of importance in marketing and consumer research, and the fact that there is much need for further exploration in these areas.

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25. Political ideology: basis for a dynamic social identity

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IDEOLOGY:

1. visionary theorizing

2 a: systematic body of concepts especially about human life or culture

b: manner or the content of thinking characteristic of an individual, group, or culture

c: the integrated assertions, theories and aims that constitute a sociopolitical program

(Merriam-Webster)

Across the globe, the ideological rift between the political left and right is growing. Between 1994 and 2017 in the United States, the proportion of each major political party feeling “government should do more to help the needy” rose 13 percent for Democrats (58 percent to 71 percent) but fell 14 percent for Republicans (38 percent to 24 percent; Pew Research Center 2017). Increasingly, Americans subscribe to the orthodoxy of the party to which they belong: an increasing number of Americans hold ideologically consistent views on important economic and societal issues, including opinions on the welfare system, government regulation, environmental protection, homosexuality, racial discrimination and immigration (Pew Research Center 2017). The underlying force driving this polarization is the rise of political belief systems as an important, guiding identity in society. As people’s political identities gain prominence, the demand for ideologically consistent views becomes stronger, because they are motivated to align newly formed views of political relevance with the tenets of their existing political identity (identity-relevance principle; Reed II et al. 2012).

Political identities are formed when the political agendas people support not only spawn social categories (for example, progressive, Republican, conservative, socialist, liberal, Tea Party member, Libertarian), but also are integrated into their sense of who they are (Reed II et al. 2012). Identities can answer defining questions for group members: who are we, what should we believe, and what should we do? (Hogg and Abrams 1988). And a particular identity gains importance when it can highlight differences between in-group and out-group members (Brewer and Campbell 1976; Tajfel and Turner 2001). The political identities people hold can

often do so effectively because they capture some of our most socially divisive beliefs, and consequently offer strong, often intractable defining lines between “us” and “them.” The chasm between people at different ends of the political spectrum is exacerbated because people increasingly interact with those having similar political viewpoints and consume news and information from sources echoing their own political beliefs (Feinberg et al. 2017; Hmielowski et al. 2014; Herman and Chomsky 1988; Zaller 1992). Therefore, liberals and conservatives not only hold very different worldviews, but also tend to inhabit liberal or conservative bubbles, making it difficult to establish a single shared reality (Hogg and Rinella 2018).

Coherent belief systems underlie the set of ideologies expressed by both sides of the ideological spectrum, and each system has long-standing historical roots (Jost et al. 2008). Liberals advocate change in society while conservatives resist it (Jost et al. 2003a). Underlying this difference is the prevalence of psychological motives suggesting upholding and maintaining the status quo in society versus rejecting it in favor of progress and change. This inclination is captured by people’s system justification motivation: the tendency to maintain and support existing systems and institutions (Jost et al. 2003a).

We suggest that political identities are an influential driver of consumers’ judgments and behaviors. Our analysis examines these effects through the lens of system justification motivations, recognizing its transitory nature. Next, we discuss what political identity is, how it is formed, and why it should be conceived dynamically. Then, we show how consumer judgments and behaviors differ depending on the strength of a person’s system justification motivation, drawing on observations of chronic differences between conservatives and liberals. And to more fully understand the triggers and boundaries of these system justification effects, we then view this influence from a dynamic perspective, revealing situational influences that make individuals become more likely to support or resist change. Finally, we offer some concluding comments and propose paths for future research.

WHAT IS POLITICAL IDENTITY AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Political ideologies comprise sets of shared beliefs, frameworks for interpreting the social world, and prescriptions for how this world should be structured (Denzau and North 1994). These ideologies not only reflect people’s overarching life philosophies, but also help them to envision what the world should be like by specifying societal ideals and means for

achieving them. Ideological opinions and positions, which feel thoughtful and principled to the person holding them, may result from non-conscious motivational undercurrents. From the perspective of a person holding an ideological position, the underlying beliefs are supported by real-world observations and arise from foundational premises to which the person subscribes (Kruglanski 1999). Yet, non-conscious personal and social motivations may influence the ostensibly reasoned processes through which a person interprets events and incoming information, deduces the causes and effects, and arranges a network of beliefs (Kunda 1990).

A central premise of this chapter is that a person's psychological needs guide the adoption and maintenance of the belief system supporting ideological positions. More specifically, conservative versus liberal ideologies are embraced due to underlying differences in the need for security and uncertainty reduction which, in turn, drives one's tendency to embrace and protect the status quo. We focus on these foundational needs and ideological tenets to understand the influence of political identity. This influence not only gives rise to positions expressed in the political and policy worlds, but also affects low-level cognitive functions, including motivational interests, cognitive processing styles, neurological structures and physiological functions (Jost 2017).

Because people's positions on political issues are often stable and unwavering (for example, pro-choice versus anti-abortion), it is tempting to view behaviors associated with political identities as fixed and stable as well. Indeed, people's political orientations have often been viewed as having a dispositional nature in marketing and psychology literature (for a review, see Jost 2017). However, scholars have recently argued for more nuanced views of the influence of political ideology on consumers (Crockett and Pendarvis 2017; Oyserman and Schwarz 2017; Rao 2017). Important conceptions of ideological influence are constructed to capture cognitive-level activity (e.g., Jost et al. 2003a), and similar frameworks capture transitory, situational identity influence (dynamic constructivism, Chiu and Hong 2007; situated cognition, Oyserman and Schwartz 2017; Oyserman and Sorenson 2009).

We build on these conceptual stances in this chapter, bringing together personality and motivational approaches. We first identify important behavioral patterns of interest that reflect chronic differences between liberals and conservatives. But in addition, our analysis includes dynamic, situation-based predictions. Figure 25.1 shows our framework, which describes forces underlying political identity effects.

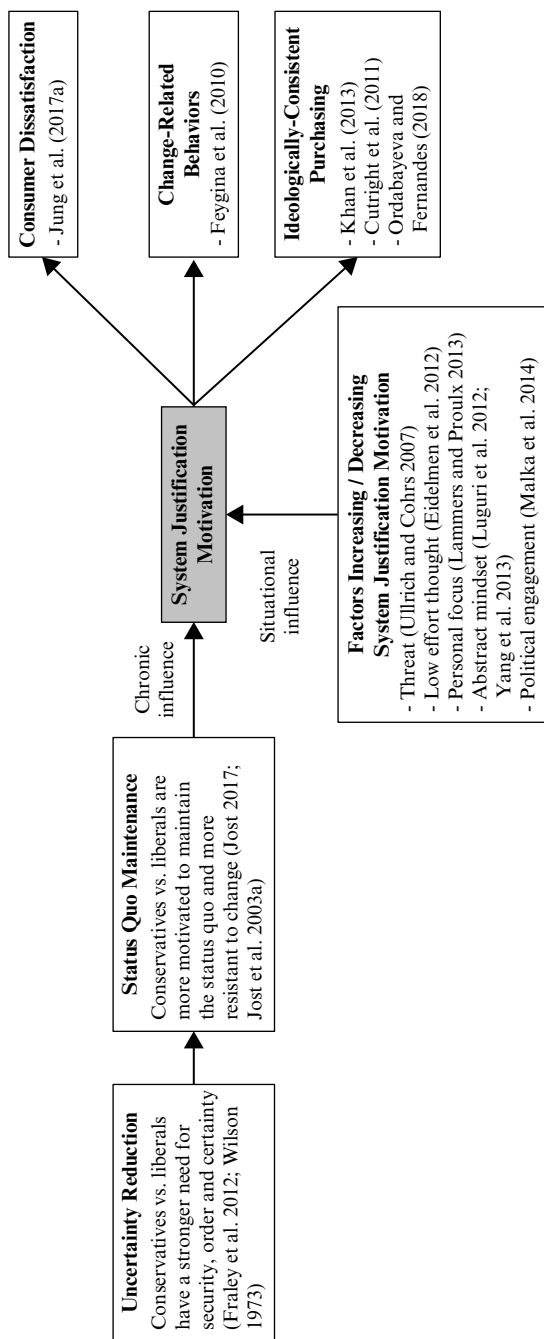


Figure 25.1 Antecedents and consumer behavior implications of system justification motivation

INFLUENCE OF SYSTEM JUSTIFICATION MOTIVATION

System Justification Motivation

Conservatives, as compared to liberals, have a stronger need to maintain feelings of security and reduce uncertainty in their lives (Wilson 1973). Differences across individuals in the importance placed on this need have been attributed to both genetic predispositions (for example, anxiety; Wilson 1973) and environmental factors, including strict parenting (Fraley et al. 2012). Manifestations of conservatives' stronger need for security can be observed in their greater intolerance of ambiguity, uncertainty avoidance, and need for order and structure (Jost and Hunyady 2005). Maintaining the status quo, or slowing the pace of change, reduces life's uncertainty by helping keep one's environment safe, predictable and secure. The inclination to justify existing social systems occurs in the service of the overarching conservative goal of resisting change. That is, conservatives strive not only to retain the status quo, but also to defend the systems and institutions essential to it. By rationalizing the way things are, one helps to bring orderliness and structure to an often disorderly world. This motivation is a foundational distinction defining the liberal-conservative divide (see system justification theory; Jost et al. 2004; Jost and Hunyady 2003, 2005).

Pressures to support society's existing systems, processes and outcomes impinge upon all members of society, including those the system disadvantages (Jost and Thompson 2000). And manifestations of this influence can take various forms, including belief in a just world (Lerner 1980), fair market ideology (Jost et al. 2003b) and economic system justification (Jost and Thompson 2000). Though distinct, these ideologies have common cognitive and motivational antecedents, and thus function together to uphold the status quo in society and legitimize the social arrangements at its core (Jost et al. 2003b; Jost and Hunyady 2005; Sidanius and Pratto 1999).

Consumer Behavior Implications

The different system justification tendencies of liberals and conservatives contribute to a range of psychological differences, and importantly, also offer implications for consumer behavior of theoretical and practical relevance.

(Dis)satisfaction, complaining and boycotting

Conservatives, relative to liberals, should show greater deference towards organizations with which they interact, because stronger system justification motivations yield greater respect for the authority of the institutions forming the system's foundation. Businesses are fundamental to our system and treating these institutions with deference serves the goal of maintaining order and consistency (Jost et al. 2009). Jung et al. (2017a) provide support for this assertion in the context of consumer complaining. In one study, the authors completed a county-level analysis of voting records and complaints lodged with the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau in the United States. To test the prediction that conservative consumers complain less than liberal consumers, they examined the relation between each county's 2012 presidential vote counts (Obama versus Romney) and complaint volume. As expected, after controlling for socio-demographic and economic indicators, the proportions of liberal votes (Obama) predicted complaint volume. This pattern also held for consumers' disputes of resolutions offered by companies to which they had complained: after controlling for socio-demographic and economic indicators and complaint characteristics, fewer disputes were reported from conservative-leaning than liberal-leaning counties. Finally, using survey data, Jung et al. (2017a) demonstrated that participants' system justification motivations mediate the influence of their political orientation on complaint likelihood.

In a similar vein, Jost et al. (2017) found that liberals, who are more critical of business practices than conservatives, are more likely to engage in politically motivated buying and boycotting behaviors. These patterns suggest that the tendency of those high in system justification motivation to show deference to businesses could have implications for a range of attitudes and behaviors that result when consumers' expectations are not met. When such events occur, conservatives are more likely than liberals to have psychological mechanisms in place that support system justification. This could include engaging in motivated remembering to assuage disappointments, and shifting causal attributions to minimize company or employee responsibility (Eitam et al. 2013). All in all, conservatives may be easier to please than liberals, and thus more likely to become and remain loyal customers. Consistent with this notion, engaging in system justification has a palliative function that leads conservatives to be happier than liberals (Napier and Jost 2008).

Receptiveness to change

Marketers often aim to persuade consumers to change their behaviours, for example, to try a new product (trial and switching); to eat more vegetables, to stop smoking and to join a gym (health marketing); to recycle

more, to support environmentally friendly efforts; and to stop sexism (social marketing). Consumers with high system justification motivations may be particularly resistant to these behavioral change efforts. Regarding social issues, greater system justification has been linked to denial of environmental realities and less commitment to pro-environmental action (Feygina et al. 2010), and opposition to certain interests or religious minorities (Nam and Jost 2014).

Purchase behaviors

Conservative consumers prefer national brands to generic brands (Khan et al. 2013), and prefer domestic brands to international brands (Cutright et al. 2011). These patterns suggest that conservatives stick to safer, more familiar options, consistent with their stronger need to reduce risk and uncertainty. In addition, conservative consumers tend to differentiate themselves vertically in the social hierarchy through products that indicate they are better than others; whereas liberal consumers tend to differentiate themselves horizontally in the social hierarchy through products that indicate they are unique from others (Ordabayeva and Fernandes 2018).

Taken together, these findings suggest that both conservative and liberal consumers engage in consumption practices that fit with their ideological leanings in ways that are not always obvious. A consumer's political identity can guide behaviors via the identity relevance principle (Reed II et al. 2012) when the product or service at issue does not necessarily have connections to or implications for the political realm. Relevance can be dictated because the outcome chosen (feeling of security) or action taken (criticizing an organization) resonates with the system justification needs underlying a person's political identity.

A DYNAMIC VIEW: WHEN ARE FORCES CAUSING SYSTEM-SUPPORTING BEHAVIORS STRONGER OR WEAKER?

Though conservatives are more motivated to engage in system justification than liberals, transitory, situational factors can increase or decrease this predisposition, and thus enhance or inhibit the behaviors described in the previous section.

Factors Increasing System Justification

As a starting point, the need to support current systems becomes stronger when a person undergoes threat, because system-justifying ideologies can

reduce the inherent uncertainties introduced and help to restore order (Jost and Hunyady 2005). The effect of threat is pervasive. Even for those who are dissatisfied with their current situation, change can be more daunting than the status quo if one perceives that threats and uncertainty abound. Threats can trigger system justification regardless of whether the individual is targeted (for example, mortality salience), or the system to which they belong is threatened (social system legitimacy; Landau et al. 2004). Ullrich and Cohrs (2007) found that system justification was more prevalent when terrorist attacks were made salient to participants. Similarly, a meta-analysis by Jost et al. (2017) finds that both objectively threatening circumstances and subjective perceptions of threat increased reliance on conservative principles and motivations.

Studies by Eidelman et al. (2012) suggest that a lack of effortful thinking leads to reliance on system justification ideologies and other conservative principles. Because alcohol restricts cognitive capacity and impairs controlled responding, the authors expected that inebriation levels might be correlated with greater embrace of conservative principles. In their study, bar patrons completed a measure of political orientation, reported demographics, and took a breathalyzer test. Participants' blood alcohol concentration levels were predictive of their reported political conservatism, after controlling for gender, education and ideological self-identification. In other studies, Eidelman et al. (2012) found that greater cognitive load and time pressure increased endorsements of conservative views as well.

Adopting a focus that makes personal decisions and development salient prompts stronger system justification, according to research by Lammers and Proulx (2013). They predicted that having people write chronological autobiographical narratives would increase focus on their personal decisions, and decrease emphasis on chance as a contributor to their current personal situation. People who reflect on their own decisions and storyline should become more likely to think of the status quo as fair and legitimate, and therefore to develop a preference for maintaining the status quo. In line with these predictions, the authors found that participants who wrote chronological autobiographical narratives, as compared to those who wrote other types of stories, reported stronger system justification motivation and greater resistance to change.

Factors Decreasing System Justification

Some interventions decrease reliance on system justification. First, Luguri et al. (2012) examined the effects of abstract thinking on prejudice attitudes, which are sustained by system justification ideologies (Jost and Hunyady 2003). Participants had either an abstract or a concrete mindset activated,

then recorded their feelings about some marginalized groups, including gays, lesbians and Muslims. Conservatives (versus liberals) indicated less positive feelings toward these groups generally, and the results for concrete mindset conditions mirrored this pattern. But, consistent with the authors' predictions, conservatives become more tolerant of marginalized groups when they adopted an abstract mindset, such that the difference between liberals and conservatives was non-significant in these conditions. Another view of the influence of abstract thinking should be noted. In particular, Yang et al. (2013) found that left-right polarization of attitudes about the Ground Zero mosque were reduced by inducing an abstract mindset, with both conservatives and liberals softening their positions.

Second, though people with strong security needs are expected to embrace system justification and other conservative principles (Wilson 1973), Malka et al. (2014) found that this relationship held only for politically engaged people. Greater exposure to political discourse, a consequence of engagement, strengthens the association between chronic security needs and conservatism, and drives polarization of political beliefs (Kimmelmeier 1997; Jost et al. 2009). Factors that decrease people's levels of political engagement, including geographic (remote locations) and temporal (non-presidential election year) distance from campaigning and other political activities, are likely to weaken system justification tendencies and political polarization more generally.

Ideology-Congruent Framing of Pro-Environmental Messages

The content of persuasive messages can be manipulated to more successfully encourage people to take up change. In particular, to attract support for change-oriented initiatives from consumers with strong system justification motivations, it might be possible to craft messaging that aligns with these motivations. This idea was tested by Feygina et al. (2010) using messages encouraging the implementation of environmental protections, a change-oriented initiative. They theorized that the negative effects of system justification motivation on a change-oriented initiative could be attenuated if messages are reframed so that the suggested action is sanctioned by, rather than challenging, the system. Participants read messages encouraging pro-environmental action, and two lines that framed environmental activism as a patriotic, system-preserving activity were added for about half of them (for example, "It is patriotic to conserve the country's natural resources"; Feygina et al. 2010, p. 333). The results confirmed the authors' predictions. In control conditions, participants' system justification motivations were negatively associated with their intentions to commit to pro-environmental action. However, when pro-environmental

messages are framed so as to convey patriotism and status quo protection, the negative effect of system justification on environmentalism became non-significant.

Other research shows that conservatives may be more accepting of environmental messages when the message's moral frame fits with conservative conceptions of moral correctness. Environmental messages often appeal to targets' morals, and such appeals can address either binding moral values (loyalty, authority; for example, "Demonstrate your respect by following the examples of your religious and political leaders who defend America's natural environment") or individualizing moral values (care, fairness; for example, "Do the right thing by preventing the suffering of all life-forms and making sure that no one is denied their right to a healthy planet") (Wolsko et al. 2016, p.9). Studies find that by using messages touting binding (versus individualizing) moral frames, differences between liberals and conservatives are reduced or reversed for climate change attitudes, environmental conservation intentions and recycling intentions (Kidwell et al. 2013; Wolsko et al. 2016). These findings suggest that by gaining a thorough understanding of the ideology of conservatives and liberals, and applying frames such that messages are ideologically congruent with their targets, more effective persuasion is possible.

The mere presence of certain environmental messages may at times be a hindrance when targeting conservatives. Gromet et al. (2013) show that conservative consumers were less likely to purchase a more expensive energy-efficient light bulb when it was labeled with a pro-environmental message. According to the authors, the environmental message conflicts with their support of and confidence in free market principles. In a similar vein, Jung et al. (2017b) find that Republican-leaning communities in the United States are significantly less likely than Democrat-leaning communities to engage in pro-environmental activities such as recycling, green product purchase and donation to environmental organizations. This difference is attenuated (versus pronounced) for lower (versus higher) socio-economic status communities, demonstrating interplay between political ideology and socio-economic factors.

CONCLUSIONS

The study of the interplay between political identity and consumer behavior is in its infancy. Because of increasing ideological polarization, and because consumers are increasingly signaling their identity through marketplace behaviors, we believe that the influence of political identity will increase. Research to date has focused primarily on how and why

conservatives and liberals diverge, using individual difference variables such as personality characteristics and attitudes. The present chapter draws insights using a more nuanced approach. We draw on the fact that people are motivated to preserve the status quo and, therefore, to support and justify prevailing systems and processes. However, the disposition to do so differs across individuals and across situations.

We believe that our analysis demonstrates a pervasive effect of consumers' political identities on everyday consumption behaviors. We show that a person's political identity influences attitudes and behaviors via the identity relevance principle for a range of situations beyond those of direct political import. By viewing consumers' system justification motivation as an underlying driver of political beliefs, our discussion suggests that a person's political identity is relevant for a range of behaviors, including challenging organizations (complaining, boycotting), adopting change (new product trial and innovation adoption) and choosing products and brands (familiarity, riskiness).

Future research should continue to move the field toward more nuanced models of political identity's influence on behavior, thus improving predictive power and the effective targeting of relevant consumer segments. Our analysis suggests that left-right differences do not always emanate from a chasm in core values and attitudes, as suggested by broad individual difference analyses. For example, the assumption that liberals prioritize the environment over business concerns, and conservatives do the opposite, may not be true. According to the evidence we review, the gap between liberals and conservatives in environmental concern and advocacy can be narrowed by understanding the particular values endorsed by each of these groups, and framing appeals in ways that resonate with each group's values. To address the vast array of critical issues faced by society – including climate change, immigration, healthcare, gender bias and fiscal policy – it will be useful to develop a sophisticated taxonomy describing liberal and conservative political identities, so that communications and messaging on these topics can be improved. It is important to test some of our assumptions about political differences, which may be superficial and incorrect.

Another fruitful path for bringing those with opposing political identities together will be to find interventions that reduce people's adherence to their own positions. Engendering an abstract mindset, for example, may cause both liberals and conservatives to loosen their embrace of their own political identities, and to move away from their natural political positions on sensitive, politically charged topics (Yang et al. 2013). Shifting people to creative or youthful mindsets (Fitzsimons et al. 2008) may also soften their adherence to identity-congruent opinions and positions on controversial issues of social relevance.

Finally, more research is needed that adopts a dynamic rather than a dispositional view. Though consumers' political ideologies undoubtedly correlate with various personality characteristics and attitudes, it is important to understand when the accompanying identity is in force or dormant. Our understanding of the scope and boundaries of many of political ideology's influences on consumers is still limited, including when the behaviors of liberals and conservatives will diverge or converge. Our framework suggests that differences between liberal and conservative consumers can often be replicated within an individual, by prompting more or less system justification motivation. Research that uses identity principles to understand this influence, and that incorporates a dynamic awareness, can provide a much stronger, more coherent understanding of the consumer phenomena of interest.

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26. Identity in the digital age

Lauren Grewal and Andrew T. Stephen

The world is digital. More than ever before, consumers are active on multiple types of digital channels. Not only are consumers using more online platforms; the frequency of time they spend on digital and social media is increasing. For instance, by early 2018, on average, 51 percent of social media users stated that they visit social media sites multiple times a day, on average spending more than six hours on these sites daily (Molla 2018; Smith and Anderson 2018). Considering the proliferation of digital and social media use, understanding how consumers are influenced by and engaging with an increasing digital world is exceedingly important.

As with actual, real-world actions and behaviors, consumers can use digital and social media to express their identities (Belk 2013). When we consider how a consumer can express an identity, we consider any category label (for example, mother, athlete) to which a consumer self-associates through choice or endowment to be an identity (Reed et al. 2012). Considering this definition of identity, we propose that as online user-generated content (UGC) and social media enable consumers to transmit social information, a key motivation to consumer actions on these digital channels may be about engaging with identity-relevant content (Swann 1983). Research has shown how digital and social media can be used for self-presentation, affiliation and expression purposes (Back et al. 2010; Gosling et al. 2007; Toubia and Stephen 2013; Wilcox and Stephen 2013). Thus, we believe that consumers will utilize digital and social media to express a wide variety of identities, and we predict that different aspects of online identity expression will influence subsequent identity-relevant actions and behaviors from consumers, both online and offline.

While the literature on identity expression has mostly assumed that identity is communicated through actual ownership, consumption or group membership (Berger and Heath 2007, 2008), as we are currently in the age of social media and the connected consumer (Deighton et al. 2017), the digital world may make new options related to identity expression available, and thus may have some unintended consequences for subsequent behaviors. As Lamberton and Stephen (2016) and Stephen (2016) note, extant literature tends to have little to say about consumer-level phenomena in the context of online social behavior. There is only a recent exploration of the psychological processes that underlie the creation or

evaluation of online word-of-mouth (WOM) (Berger and Schwartz 2011; Cheema and Kaikati 2010; Chen and Berger 2016), and specifically on the implications of digital channels in conjunction with identity (Back et al. 2010; Belk 2013; Grewal et al. 2019).

To address this nascent area of research, we propose a framework of consumer identity in digital and social media channels and discuss potential avenues for future research. Specifically, we build from the identity principles framework, wherein we propose that a consumer's behavior online, when related to identity expression, falls under the identity relevance principle (Reed et al. 2012). This principle states that when identity information is deliberately processed, its influence will be greatest on stimuli that possess relevance to the identity (Reed et al. 2012). Considering this principle, we argue that there are situations in which digital identity expression has different antecedents and consequences than identity expression as it has been traditionally studied in offline, physical channels. Therefore, an exploration of identity in the digital age is extremely important as our lives are increasingly lived in digital environments

IDENTITY EXPRESSION

Identities are any category labels that a consumer self-associates with that define a basis for social classification that helps to create and maintain people's self-concept (Aquino and Reed 2002; Reed et al. 2012). Consumers have multiple identities that make up their global sense of self that they will use to calibrate and regulate their attitudes, behaviors, beliefs and judgments (Kleine et al. 1993; Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012). When an identity is salient and relevant, and identity-relevant information is deliberately processed, it has been shown to most strongly influence subsequent decisions that are relevant to the salient identity (Reed et al. 2012). Consequently, identity-consistent stimuli are usually more positively evaluated (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; White and Dahl 2007), and identity-inconsistent stimuli are more negatively evaluated (Berger and Heath 2007; Escalas and Bettman 2005; White and Dahl 2006).

While previously, to express an identity, consumers had to be conspicuous in their consumption or actively be a part of a group (Berger and Heath 2007, 2008), in the digital age there are multiple outlets for identities beyond traditional ownership and consumption. For example, consumers can post on social media networks, share photos through apps, rate and review products and services, and join different types of identity-relevant communities (for example, role-playing game sites or brand communities). These outlets provide consumers with opportunities

to form, create, express and signal various identities. Additionally, in the digital world there are often observable (and easy-to-use) mechanisms for feedback on others' actions, such as liking or sharing social media posts. These feedback mechanisms in digital environments likely interact with the identity-related actions taken by individuals and can have implications for identity reinforcement. Considering the multitude of digital options available, what then are the implications of identity research in the digital domain?

In a broad sense, we believe that expressing identity on digital or social media channels is a multi-step process with several considerations at each step. The first consideration for consumers is the decision of engaging with an identity online. At this stage, a consumer not only has to determine whether or not they will actively construct and/or engage with an identity online, but also has to determine which identities to express or actively construct online, what platform(s) to use for each identity they choose to digitally express, and the possible audience to each identity expression across platforms. Each of these choices has different consequences that could influence the individual posting identity-relevant content, the audience of this expression, and the relationship between the person posting and the people receiving the content.

Considering all of these moving pieces, in the sections that follow we walk through the process a consumer may go through when choosing to engage with an identity online, and address some possible research questions that are in line with each stage of the consumer's digital identity expression process. See Figure 26.1 for our framework encompassing each of the multiplicative factors a consumer has to consider when expressing identity deliberately online, and see Table 26.1 for some possible research questions based on these factors.

ANTECEDENTS AND CONSEQUENCES OF IDENTITY EXPRESSION ON SOCIAL MEDIA

The first way that we will discuss differences between traditional and online identity expression is regarding the antecedents of digital identity expression. Traditionally, consumers will be able to physically engage in identities that they hold in many ways in their life. For example, someone who is an athlete can buy athletic shoes, join an intramural sports team, and find other athletes to interact with. However, there are instances where someone has an identity that is unattainable in their physical life (due to, for example, financial constraints, safety concerns, physical limitations, and so on). In this instance, the ability to create, reinforce and interact

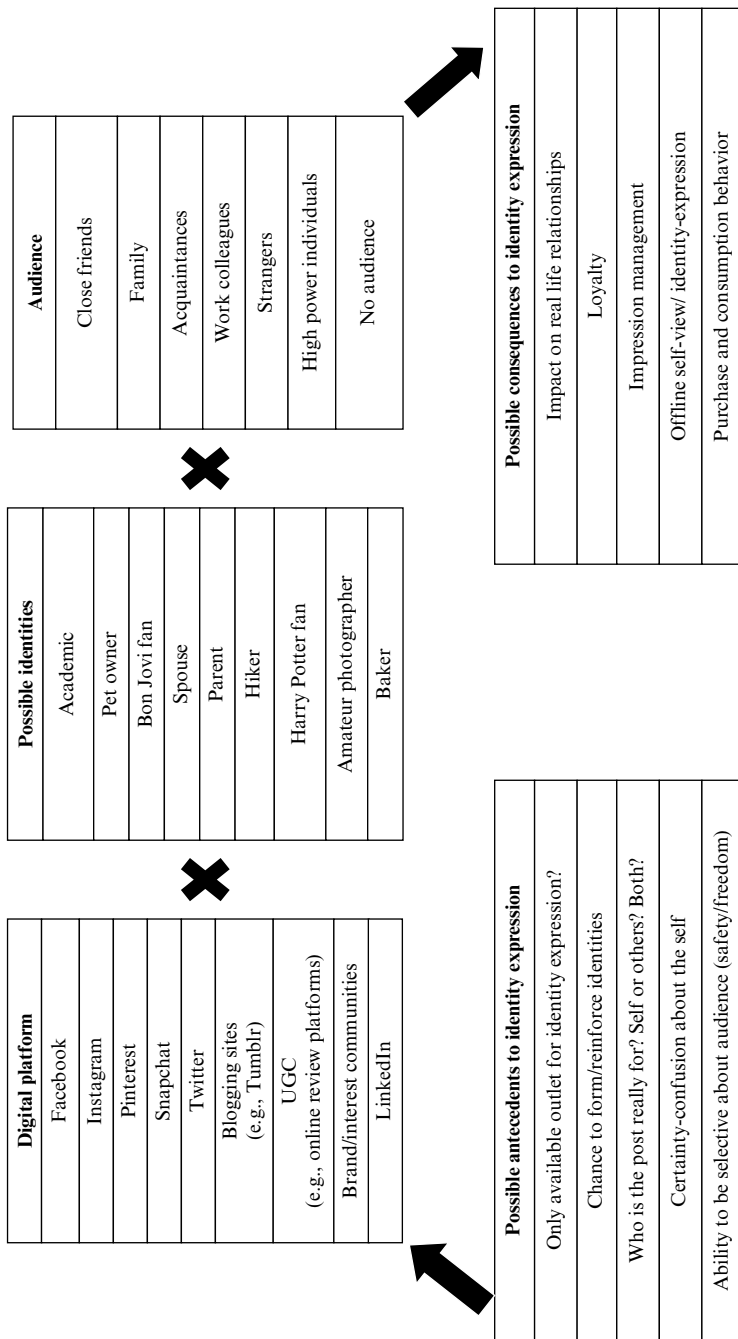


Figure 26.1 Framework of multiplicative factors affecting deliberate online identity expression

Table 26.1 Sample ideas for future research on identity and social media

Topic	Sample research questions
Antecedents to identity expression on social media online	Why does a consumer express an identity on social media? How does a consumer choose what platform to post their identity on? What role does the audience play in the feelings surrounding identity expression on social media?
Consequences to identity expression on social media	When does identity expression on social media encourage greater (less) identity-consistent behavior offline? How does the audience of identity expression further exacerbate (mitigate) offline behavior? Do consumers feel as though their online identities are as “real” as offline identities?
Transmitters of identity on social media	How does showcasing or signaling different identities on social media influence consumers’ self-perceptions and behavior? How does showcasing or signaling identity through different on social media platforms influence consumers’ self-perceptions and behavior? How do consumers navigate various identities on social media? What are the psychological and marketing implications of consumers engaging with multiple identities on social media?
Recipients of identity on social media	How does seeing other people expressing different identities on social media influence consumers’ self-perceptions and behavior? How does seeing other people expressing different identities on social media influence the relationship between consumers? What are the psychological and marketing implications of receiving targeting on social media regarding multiple identities?

with others with these identities online may be the only feasible way for a consumer to engage with and express this identity.

In this type of situation, consumers can create a “digital self” that is separate and distinct from who they are in their physical world. As Belk (2013) describes when considering the extended self in terms of online avatars, consumers have more choice when it comes to creating their self-representation (Bryant and Akerman 2009; Kamel 2009), allowing the possibility for engaging more with an ideal self, possible self or alternative self (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth 2010; Kozinets and Kedzior 2009; Young and Whitty 2012). The consequences of displaying these different types of identities are not yet understood.

Relevant to the above point, how do consumers reconcile having identities that only exist in their digital, rather than physical, lives? Is this something that comes as a relief to consumers, as it allows them to engage with their full selves, or is this something that can be psychologically taxing as it is only allowing a consumer partial fulfillment of an identity? Do the consequences of these identities differ if the identity being expressed is seen as unattainable but still relevant to the self, versus if the identity is seen as being inauthentic to the self? For example, if someone were to portray themselves as an athlete online, but in actuality they are not an athlete, nor are they working towards achieving this identity, then do their evaluations and decisions around athlete-relevant stimuli become influenced by their digital actions and expressions?

Or what about the related case where a digital identity is unrealistically perfect? In these cases, there is a large gap between digital identity as expressed, and identity as it exists in reality. What are the repercussions for the self in an instance such as this? Does belief about self-identities change over time (for example, the consumer begins to see themselves as athletic over time, regardless of actual offline behavior)? Will offline behavior change to match the digital self (for example, the consumer begins to see themselves as athletic over time, and thus changes their actual offline behavior)?

One factor that we believe will play a large role in determining how individuals choose to factor these digital identities into their physical lives is how relevant this unrealistic or unattainable identity is to goals the individual may have. Perhaps, for identities where the goal is to affiliate with a product or brand, no future offline behavior is necessary to achieve identity-relevant goals; while for those who are engaging with identities where action relevance is necessary to achieve the identity (for example, being a Zumba instructor involves physical action, while being a Zumba enthusiast does not), offline behavior may change. Future research can examine how, when consumers can engage with otherwise unattainable (or possibly false or impossibly perfect) identities online, that then influences their lives above and beyond their online actions in conjunction with those expressed identities.

Digital identity expression also differs from traditional identity expression as, unlike in real life where consumers have finite possibilities for identity expression, there are infinite digital options and outlets to express, maintain and reinforce identities. Therefore, along with a new ability to express identities that may otherwise be unattainable offline, consumers who choose to express identities (whether already held or unique to their digital self) now have another consideration that may not have been as salient offline: the audience of the posts. As previously mentioned, there

are multiple types of online avenues for identity expression, some that are more anonymous or detached from a person's "analog self," and some that are created or reinforced in conjunction with the identities the consumer holds in their daily life.

Therefore, a consideration for future research could be to examine who the digital identity expression is actually "for." When a consumer is choosing to express an identity through social media sites that are typically connected to a consumer's name and face, with social networks that can encompass a wide range of individuals (for example, family, close friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and so on), this has different possible rationales and ramifications than when a consumer chooses to post on sites that may be more anonymous. Are these more or less "visible" types of identity expression done mostly for the sake of the person engaging with the identity, or are the actions and avenues chosen mostly for the audience?

Future research can address the role and importance of the audience for different online platforms and types of identities expressed virtually. There may be situations where an audience influences how aspirational identity signaling (for example, fitness goals) will influence greater (or less) offline identity consistency and engagement in these behaviors. Possibly, depending on the type of identity being expressed (for example, actual self versus ideal self), along with the type of audience the expression is available to, will moderate whether digital identity expression increases (or decreases) the desire for offline identity congruency. In our next section, we discuss further the implications of digital identity expression for both the transmitters of virtual content and the recipients viewing this content.

BEING A TRANSMITTER VERSUS A RECIPIENT OF IDENTITY EXPRESSION IN SOCIAL MEDIA

When considering digital identity expression, we think in terms of dyads: that is, there are two participants or sides who must be considered. The first is the transmitter of identity-relevant content, and the second is the recipients of this content. Considering the first participant in the dyad, the transmitter, there are several interesting questions to consider.

As identities can be transmitted across different networks, to people of varying network ties and strengths, one of the first questions to consider is how being a transmitter of identity expression can possibly influence further thoughts, identification and behavior. Does it impact a consumers' real-life relationships by changing their thoughts on their own in-group or out-group affiliations? For example, does someone who posts about environmental causes become more "green" in how they see themselves,

and does this then influence their thoughts towards friends who do and do not recycle? Are there positive or negative social and personal benefits to a consumer after they have had the opportunity to engage with identities online? Does it make someone feel as though their “analog self” is lacking, or does it compensate and allow an avenue of expression that makes someone feel more fulfilled? For example, does someone who has a chance to engage with luxury brands such as Gucci online feel as though they are even further from their ideal self in their physical life, or does this virtual engagement satiate the need for this luxurious self?

Additionally, when considering the implications of transmitting identity-relevant content on social media, an important thing to consider is that consumers are not necessarily engaging with just one identity that they hold; instead, they are navigating various aspects of their multifaceted selves. Previously, research focused on identity has examined the engagement and expression of singular active and salient identities. However, in the digital domain, any given consumer can be confronted with multiple identities in parallel that they must maintain and focus on (see Figure 26.2 for an example of a consumer’s multiple identities that may be simultaneously engaged through the same or different digital channels; see also Reed and Forehand 2016, figure 2, p. 95). Whether consumers choose to engage with multiple identities through the same channels, or separate them out to different platforms, and the extent to which they engage with each of these identities, should have different implications for the consumer.

To address how identity expression, when utilized through products and brands on social media, then influences purchase, we have conducted a study included here.¹ Prior research would predict that deliberate identity expression through products and brands on social media should encourage greater brand loyalty, purchase and consumption due to identity-consistency motives and greater perceived identity relevance (Oyserman 2009; Reed et al. 2012). In other words, research would predict that identity expression on social media should complement consumers’ held identities by increasing the desire that their physical life is consistent with their virtual life. Although conceivable, we believe there are instances where the opposite effect is more likely to occur, as identity expression online may fulfill a consumer’s identity-signaling needs, lowering subsequent interest in purchasing or owning identity-relevant goods.

In our study, we examined how digital identity expression negatively influenced purchase intent only for products that were relevant to the expressed identity online (that is, represented that identity), but not for

¹ This study was collected with our colleague Nicole Verrochi Coleman.

Digital channel	Person A's multiple identities									
		Academic	Pet owner	Bon Jovi fan	Spouse	Parent	Hiker	Harry Potter fan	Amateur photographer	Baker
	Facebook	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	Instagram	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Pinterest	✓					✓		✓	✓
	Snapchat		✓	✓						✓
	Twitter	✓		✓		✓		✓		
	Blogging sites (e.g., tumblr)	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
	UGC (e.g., online review platforms)		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
	Brand/interest communities		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
LinkedIn	✓								✓	

Figure 26.2 Multiple illustrative engagement via digital channels

products that represented another identity. Based on our theory, we predicted that we would find a decreased interest in identity-relevant products that were virtually showcased on social media. On the other hand, in the case of products that are identity-relevant but that have not been expressed on social media, we predicted there would be no decreased interest for those types of products. We believed this would occur as no symbolic or object relevance value would have been achieved virtually, as these products are separate from the “symbolic constellation of products” that define the expressed identity (Reed et al. 2012). For example, a consumer who posts products relevant to their ideal self should only have lower purchase intentions for products that are relevant to their ideal self (for example, a luxury coat), not for products related to another identity they may hold, like their actual self (for example, athletic shoes). In this scenario, the actual self has not been virtually expressed through the consumer’s ideal self virtual posting, and consequently, purchase intentions for the actual self should not be impacted as the posts hold no identity-relevance on this decision.

To examine this, we had all participants in our study ($n = 230$, $M_{\text{age}} = 34$ years, 71 percent women, all active Pinterest users) find products on Pinterest that represented three of their different self-concepts (that is, actual self and ideal self and non-self-representative products). Then, within the study, participants were randomly assigned to post products on Pinterest from one category of their self-concept (that is, actual self or ideal self or non-self-representative). Lastly, participants were randomly assigned to indicate purchase intentions for the products from one of their self-concepts (that is, actual self or ideal self) regardless of whether or not they posted those products. Thus, participants gathered products relevant to all three self-concept conditions, but only posted about one, and then provided purchase intentions for one, allowing us to construct a fully crossed design of posting and interest within and across identity-relevance in a 3 (identity posted: ideal self, actual self, non-self-representative control) $\times$ 2 (products evaluated: ideal self, actual self) between-subjects design.

To restate what we mentioned above with further detail, this study contained three parts. Prior to any manipulations, everyone found nine products on Pinterest within the clothing and fashion accessories category (that is, an identity-relevant product category; Berger and Heath 2007; Shavitt and Nelson 1999) to create an initial product set. All participants found three products that represented their ideal self-concept (that is, who they want to be), three products representing their actual self-concept (that is, who they currently are), and three products representing a control condition (that is, products that were not self-representative) (self-concept language taken from Shah et al. 1998). Participants did not pin these

products to Pinterest. Participants only provided the URLs and product names into the online survey.

Next, participants began the actual experiment by creating a new public Pinterest board. They were randomly instructed to create a board that represented one of their identity categories (that is, ideal self or actual self or control/not self-representative). To create these boards, participants used the three items from their initial product set that represented the category they were randomly assigned to post (that is, used ideal self-products from initial set if assigned to create ideal self board) and actually pinned (that is, posted) these items to their Pinterest board.

Lastly, participants were randomly assigned to indicate purchase intentions for the products from one of their initial product sets (either their actual self or ideal self products). This category did not have to be the same as the one they posted. Participants indicated their purchase intentions on a Likert scale (1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”) for each of the three randomly ordered products.

Participants rated their purchase intentions for three products (leaving us with 870 observations overall). We created a dependent variable that represented the average purchase intention towards all three evaluated products (that is, purchase intentions for the three ideal or actual self-products; $\alpha = 0.96$). To test our predictions, we used a random effects model to regress each variable on the extent to which participants indicated purchase intentions by a variable representing posting ideal self products (actual or control posts = -1, ideal post = 1), a variable representing posting actual self products (ideal or control posts = -1, actual post = 1), the product category evaluated (ideal self products = -1, actual self products = 1), and the two-way interactions with a random effect to control for multiple observations per participant.

In addition to finding significant main effects and interactions (all $p < 0.001$), importantly, when we examined how each type of posting influenced purchase intentions, we found results consistent with our predictions. Specifically, we found that when consumers posted actual self products, they had significantly lower purchase intentions for the actual self products compared to the ideal self products ($p < 0.001$). When consumers posted ideal self products, they had significantly lower purchase intentions for the ideal self products compared to the actual self products ($p < 0.001$). We found no significant differences in purchase intentions between actual self and ideal self products after consumers posted control (that is, non-self-representative) products (see Figure 26.3 for study means and results).

In this study, we provide initial evidence that consumers have less interest in purchasing identity-relevant products after they have posted these

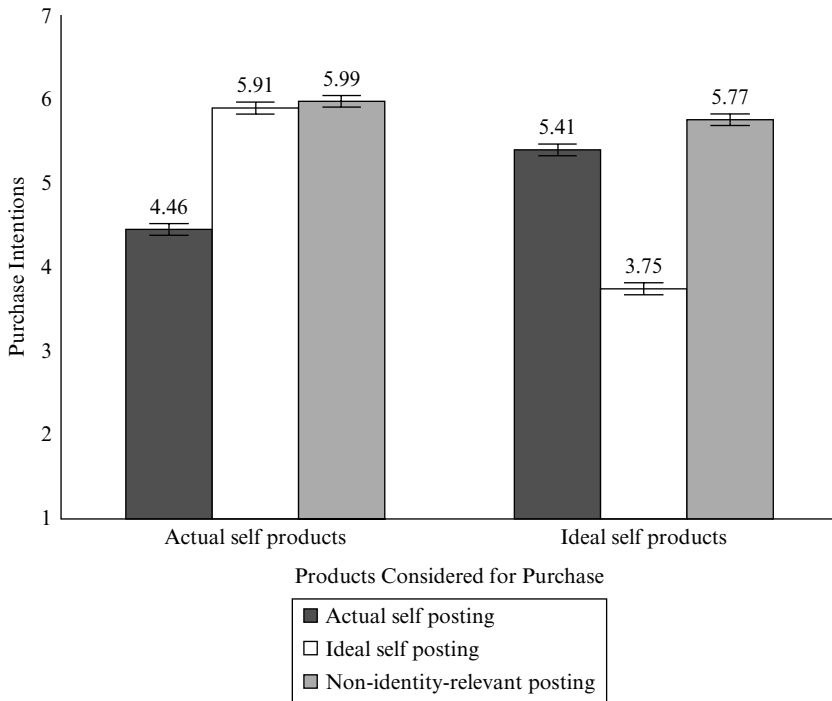


Figure 26.3 Effect of actual, ideal and non-identity relevant postings on purchase intent for actual and ideal self products

same identity-relevant products on social media. Importantly, we found that identity-relevant product posts do not reduce purchase intentions for products generally. The negative effect of identity-relevant product posts on purchase intentions happened only when participants indicated purchase intentions for the same identity-relevant products as those posted virtually.

While in this subsection we have considered some consequences and questions regarding the transmitters of digital identity expression, in the next subsection we further delve into the audience (that is, recipients) of identity expression on digital and social media.

Receiving Identity-Relevant Information on Social Media

When considering the other side of identity expression on social media (that is, recipients of content), there is a lot that is unknown. Currently, the majority of research on UGC and WOM has focused on the actions

of recipients of online content (see review papers: Berger 2014; Floyd et al. 2014; Lamberton and Stephen 2016; Babić Rosario et al. 2016; Stephen 2016; You et al. 2015). However, when considering the role of identity, research has focused mostly on the consumer actively engaging with or expressing an identity (that is, the transmitter of identity) rather than the recipients of identity expression. Therefore, research that considers the repercussions for the recipients of identity expression would enhance the prior literatures of UGC, WOM and identity. Specifically, understanding how a transmitter's identity-relevant content makes recipients see both the transmitter and themselves (in terms of that identity), is an interesting question to consider.

In line with this thinking, audiences can be privy to different types of identity expression. While a transmitter is trying to navigate multiple distinct and unique aspects of the self (for example, spouse, academic, equestrian, musician), recipients of identity expressions are trying to reconcile the different identities the transmitter is expressing. While consumers can understand that their thoughts and behavior may not always match, research has shown that they believe that other people's thoughts and behavior correspond (Prentice and Miller 1993; Pronin et al. 2007). Therefore, considering this research, how do recipients reconcile a transmitter's digital identity expression when it conflicts with the identity (or identities) they portray in their physical lives? Does this have repercussions for how someone views the transmitter, but also change how recipients view themselves, their in-groups and out-groups, and their relationship with the transmitter?

Considering these questions, while in research being conducted we have found that transmitters of identity-relevant content were less likely to purchase identity-relevant products after signaling their identity on social media (Grewal et al. 2019), possibly an audience to these posts may be encouraged to purchase these products due to increased feelings of pride or liking (Bellezza and Keinan 2014). On the other hand, overly conspicuous consumption of identity-relevant products on social media could cause dilution for some target customers, discouraging purchase intentions more broadly not only at the individual level but also at the aggregate level (Ferraro et al. 2013). There could also be negative repercussions to seeing dissimilar or disliked others posting the same products (Berger and Heath 2008). Alternatively, there could also be negative repercussions when others post the same products because people strive to avoid too much similarity (Brewer 1991). These are all unanswered questions that could drive future research, as prior research supports conflicting hypotheses for how online identity expression could possibly then inform the attitudes, judgments and online and offline behavior of the audience to identity expression.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we have considered how identity expression differs when conducted on digital platforms (versus in a person's physical everyday life). We discussed several novel ways in which digital identity expression may influence consumer attitudes and behavior. As our world becomes increasingly digital, understanding the unique ways in which identity expression, well-being, interpersonal relationships, and identity-relevant consumption behavior are impacted by digital identity expression is extremely valuable. In this chapter, building from the identity principles framework, we discussed our framework for digital identity expression that considers the antecedents and consequences of online identity expression for both transmitters and recipients of this virtual content. Additionally, we discussed a number of possible avenues for future research to consider in this area.

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27. The role of identity relevance in the retail environment

Jennifer Argo

INTRODUCTION

The retail industry is huge. In 2017 alone total retail sales worldwide were US\$23.45 trillion (O'Connell 2018). As bricks-and-mortar stores continue to capture the majority of retail sales, retailers spend millions of dollars each year building, designing and refurbishing their stores, and major online retailers begin to open physical retail spaces (Store Support 2018), it is important to understand how the retail environment (for example, ambient features, signage, interior layout, salesforce) in bricks-and-mortar spaces influences consumers. Research studying the impact of the retail environment on consumers dates back almost 50 years (Donovan and Rossiter 1982; Kotler 1973). While the overall conclusion of this work is that the retail environment is highly influential (e.g., Babin and Attaway 2000; Baker et al. 1992; Bitner 1990; Buckley 1991; Donovan and Rossiter 1982; Grewal and Baker 1994; Grossbart et al. 1990; Milliman 1982), over the years there have been calls for more theoretical approaches to understand how and why elements of the retail environment are influential (e.g., Turley and Milliman 2000).

In this chapter I review research on the retail environment through the lens of a consumer identity researcher. Throughout this discussion I embrace the broad definition of identity as entailing “any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment” (Reed II et al. 2012, p.312). Following Oyserman (2009; see also Reed II et al. 2012) the basic argument of my chapter is that both physical and social features of the retail environment can be identity-relevant to consumers, and as such they will influence consumers’ thoughts, feelings and behaviors. I have divided the chapter into three main sections. In the first section, I provide a brief overview on the retail environment. The second section presents evidence that supports my argument that the physical and social retail environments are influential when they are identity-relevant. I structure this discussion around four elements of identity relevance: object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance and action relevance. In the third section I identify four areas for future research to further our under-

standing of the relationship between the retail environment and identity. A final section concludes. Before proceeding, I want to acknowledge that in several instances throughout this chapter the work I cite was not originally discussed from an identity perspective. Instead, I interpret the authors' work through the lens of identity to provide novel insights to the field.

THE RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

The notion that the environment can be influential has long been acknowledged by practitioners and researchers in a variety of domains such as interior design, psychology and marketing (Donovan and Rossiter 1982; Kotler 1973). In the marketing discipline several taxonomies have been designed to identify situational factors (also referred to as atmospherics) that impact consumers (e.g., Baker 1986; Belk 1975; Bitner 1992; Steele 1973), and research has explored various features of these taxonomies. For example, one category that appears across taxonomies is the physical environment, which includes both the interior space within the retail outlet (for example, layout, signage, design and furniture) and its exterior (for example, window displays), and ambient features (for example, scent, music; Bitner 1992). Research finds that the physical environment can impact many things including how consumers process information, their perceptions of how long they have been waiting, purchase decisions and overall satisfaction (e.g., Baker and Cameron 1996; Bitner 1990; Harrell et al. 1980; Meyers-Levy and Zhu 2007). A second category of environmental features in retail is the social environment, which refers to the number, type and behavior of people in the retail space (Argo et al. 2005), and includes both customers and the salesforce (Baker 1986). Similar to the physical environment, the social environment is highly influential and can impact for instance how consumers feel, their product and brand evaluations and choice, and how much money they spend (e.g., Argo et al. 2005; Dahl et al. 2012; Kurt et al. 2011). In short, both physical and social elements of the retail environment have implications for consumers.

IDENTITY RELEVANCE IN THE RETAIL SPACE

In this section I review research that provides support for my premise that features in the physical and social environments can be identity-relevant (that is, diagnostic). Moreover, when an environmental feature is identity-relevant it will have implications for the consumer. To achieve this, I structure my discussion around four elements of identity relevance

discussed in Reed II et al. (2012): object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance and action relevance.

Object Relevance

According to Reed II et al. (2012 p. 316), object relevance is present when a focal object is a part of the “symbolic constellation of products that define an identity.” Two examples of how features in the retail environment can be object-relevant are the presence of contagion (that is, contaminated products) and consumption roles. I will discuss both in turn below.

Contagion, also referred to as contamination, occurs when a source (that is, a consumer or product) is believed to have touched a focal product. In this instance, the source’s “essence” (for example, identity) transfers to the focal product and the focal product becomes “contaminated” (Argo et al. 2006, 2008; Morales et al. 2018; Morales and Fitzsimons 2007). Importantly, perceptions of contagion are easily elicited as simple cues in the retail environment. For example, close proximity between the focal product and the place of social contact (that is, the fitting room; Argo et al. 2006) have been shown to create inferences that a product is contaminated even if a source of contamination is not actually seen. Considering contagion from an object relevance perspective, a contaminated product is identity-relevant when consumers believe the product has previously been in contact with a positive source (for example, an attractive salesperson, Argo et al. 2008; a celebrity, Newman et al. 2011). In this case, consumers believe that the positive and desirable essence of the source that has transferred to the product can transfer to the self, and thus they are willing to pay more and evaluate the contaminated product more favorably. In contrast, if consumers do not believe that the source is highly positive, they will have a negative reaction towards the contaminated product. In this instance, contagion from other shoppers, salesforce or negative (that is, disgusting) products creates a threat to object relevance as the contagion renders a focal object as less desirable and even an object to avoid.

While object relevance is typically discussed in terms of product constellations, I suggest that the construct can be extended to include other individuals in the social environment. In particular, the role that individuals play in a consumption episode (for example, salesperson or shopper) will influence how identity-relevant they are to others. Indeed, Dahl et al. (2012) found that when consumers are trying on clothes and making judgments about a product they only compare how the product looks on the self relative to another shopper, not a salesperson. The authors argue that consumers’ selective use of social comparison information occurs because of the perceived relevance of the other person. In particular, another

shopper is an identity-relevant source to a consumer as they share similar consumption roles (that is, they are both trying on a product for potential purchase); thus, how the product appears on another shopper is perceived to be diagnostic for the self. In contrast, a salesperson fulfills a different role in the retail context from the consumer and thus is deemed irrelevant as a source of comparison. Therefore, object relevance need not be limited only to products but can also include the other people in the retail environment who are relevant to one's identity.

Symbolic Relevance

Symbolic relevance is the communication or reinforcement of an identity in the eyes of others through the possession of a product or the expression of a belief. Below I provide three examples of symbolic relevance that have been studied in the retail environment: product type, sales promotions and store image.

It has long been accepted in consumer research that products are acquired not only for utilitarian purposes but also for their ability to signal identity-relevant information to others (Belk 1988; Berger and Heath 2007). While certain products are desirable to acquire and display because they can communicate positive identity-relevant information about the self to others (for example, conspicuous consumption; Nunes et al. 2011), the acquisition of other products (for example, cheap brands and embarrassing products) risks signaling negative information about one's identity when other people are nearby (e.g., Argo et al. 2005; Dahl et al. 2001). When purchasing products that risk communicating negative identity information to others, research demonstrates that consumers will employ various strategies to "hide" their purchase and in essence protect their identity (e.g., Blair and Roesse 2013). For instance, Blair and Roesse (2013) find that to dilute the negative identity-relevant information communicated with the purchase of an embarrassing product, consumers will include additional non-embarrassing items in their shopping basket. Interestingly, the presence of additional products is not sufficient in reducing the embarrassment of consumers' experience as the authors find that it is ultimately the overall composition of the basket that serves as an identity-relevant signal to others. In sum, the acquisition of individual products as well as the composition of a shopper's basket can communicate not only positive but also negative identity-relevant information to others in the retail space.

Other research has explored symbolic relevance through the availability of sales promotions such as price deals (for example, coupons). From a traditional economic perspective, consumers should prefer to pay less for a product, assuming the tangible costs are not excessive; and

indeed, Schindler (1998) finds that getting a good deal can elicit a smart shopper identity for some consumers. However, often price discounts can be accompanied by social costs, as redeeming a coupon, for instance, can signal to others that one is parsimonious or “cheap” (Ashworth et al. 2005). Hence, coupons can be identity-relevant when a consumer redeems them in a social context. To avoid communicating an undesirable identity to others and to prevent the coupon from being identity-relevant, consumers will often forego saving money and avoid using the price deal. Unfortunately, research finds that a coupon can still be identity-relevant even to a non-coupon-redeeming consumer (Argo and Main 2008). In particular, if a shopper redeems a coupon, the negative stigma associated with coupon redemption behaviors can transfer to other shoppers in close physical proximity (for example, next in line at the checkout), and as a result even a non-coupon-redeeming consumer will be perceived as “cheap” by others. As such, a coupon can be incidentally identity-relevant. Thus, the use of certain sales promotions, and coupons in particular, can be identity-relevant for both consumers taking advantage of the deals as well as others nearby.

Finally, work has studied store image, that is, a shopper’s perception of the retailer based on its functional (for example, physical properties such as product selection, store layout, décor) and psychological (for example, friendliness) attributes (Greenberg et al. 1983; Hartman and Spiro 2005; Martineau 1958; Mazursky and Jacoby 1986). This work has found that consumers are more likely to shop at a retailer whose image is congruent (that is, reinforcing) with their identity (Sirgy et al. 2000). Stated differently, a store’s image can signal whether it is identity-relevant to a consumer. To date, research has found that a variety of features in both the physical and social retail environments can communicate a store’s image and, by extension, the symbolic relevance it possesses for the consumer. One line of research has focused on how ambient features (for example, music, lighting), which typically occur in the background and affect consumers’ senses (Kotler 1973), can influence a store’s image. For instance, retail spaces with dim lighting and classical music playing tend to signal high-end (that is, prestige or wealth) related images, whereas low-end (that is, cheap or discount) store images are associated with fluorescent lighting and Top-40 music (Baker et al. 1994; see also Schlosser 1998). Other work has explored consumers’ perceptions of a retailer’s image based on the exterior of the store (for example, window displays, building architecture) (Berman and Evans 1995). This research finds that not only does the content of window displays convey product-related information (that is, what the store stocks) and announce special promotions, but it can also signal a store’s overall position and identity to consumers (Cornelius et al. 2010; Sen et al. 2002).

Finally, a retailer's social environment has also been shown to influence its image and identity relevance for consumers. For instance, O'Guinn et al. (2015) explore the information that a retailer's social density (that is, the number of people in the store) signals to consumers. They find that as the number of people goes up, observers infer that shoppers within that space have a lower social class and less income, whereas less socially dense environments are inferred to have higher-priced products. Thus, a store's social density can signal whether the store's identity is relevant to a given consumer or not. Taking these three examples together, one can conclude that elements in the environment can influence a store's image and, in effect, its relevance to consumers who seek to patronize retailers that are congruent with their identity.

Goal Relevance

Goal relevance exists when a potential belief or behavior is linked to an outcome or issue that is important to a consumer's identity. The examples of goal relevance that I provide below demonstrate how features in the retail environment can motivate a consumer to behave consistently with a relevant identity or seek to avoid an identity-relevant threat.

Research has studied how elements of the social environment can influence goal relevance for consumers and impact subsequent behaviors. For example, Kurt et al. (2011) explore how shopping with friends (versus alone) can change consumers' spending behaviors. They find that when shopping with friends, males, for whom an agency-oriented identity is relevant, will be motivated to satisfy the goal of "getting ahead." In order to behave consistently with this identity and to achieve this relevant goal, males increase the amount of money they spend. In contrast, when females shop with friends, a communion-oriented identity is activated and as a result they will be motivated to "get along." To fulfill this goal, females are more likely to engage in modest spending behaviors. Thus, the social environment can activate an identity that will determine the relevant goal that consumers will be motivated to try and satisfy.

Other research has explored how features of the retail environment can be goal-relevant because they present an identity-relevant threat that will motivate consumers to engage in protective responses. Two streams of research that illustrate this idea include work on territorial infringements (e.g., Kirk et al. 2017; Levav and Zhu 2009) and merchandise-related decisions (e.g., Argo and Dahl 2018; Hoegg et al. 2014). First, work on territorial infringements has found that when a consumer's space is violated, this creates an identity-relevant threat that they will be motivated to alleviate. For example, research on aisle width has found that narrow aisles

make consumers feel crowded and this threatens their sense of freedom (Levav and Zhu 2009). To alleviate this identity-relevant threat, consumers become motivated to express their freedom through alternative means. One such way that they can achieve this is by engaging in variety-seeking behaviors (for example, choosing a wider range of chocolate bars). As a second example, Kirk et al. (2017) find that when consumers are in line at the check-out to purchase a product, if another shopper touches that product their action will be perceived as a territorial infringement. In response to this threat consumers will protect their territory, and by extension the self, by creating boundaries to “mark” their space, using features available in the environment such as the separators on the belt at the check-out. In short, the retail environment can make a goal relevant when it threatens an aspect of the self via space infringements.

Second, research finds that merchandise-related decisions (for example, product display and sizing) can create identity-relevant threats for some consumers which will motivate them to engage in behaviors and hold attitudes that aid in alleviating the threat (Argo and Dahl 2018; Hoegg et al. 2014). For instance, Argo and Dahl (2018) find that the use of perfect mannequins in retail to display apparel can create identity-relevant threats for consumers who are dissatisfied with their own appearance. The authors find that “perfect” mannequins make society’s current standards as to what is beautiful salient, and the increased accessibility of this relevant standard is threatening to consumers who believe that they fail to meet it. In order to restore one’s self-worth in light of the identity threat, these consumers evaluate the product that the mannequin is displaying negatively. In a related investigation, Hoegg et al. (2014) find that when apparel retailers carry merchandise that reflects true sizes (that is, it does not follow the vanity-sizing trend to indicate that a product is a smaller size than is actually the case), the need to try on an article of clothing with a larger than expected size creates a threat to consumers who are not happy with their body; in essence, the clothing size is identity-relevant for these consumers, and a larger size is threatening. In response, these consumers become motivated to engage in compensatory consumption. Thus, merchandise-related decisions can create relevant identity threats to certain consumers, and in response to the threat these consumers will be motivated to engage in behaviors and hold attitudes that will enable them to protect the self.

Action Relevance

Action relevance refers to an action that one completes that is associated with an identity. In the marketing literature, action relevance has been discussed from the perspective of acquiring an object associated with

an identity (for example, a baseball bat for someone who identifies as a ball player; Reed II et al. 2012). Below I discuss how features in the retail environment, in particular signs, can also be linked to action relevance.

Signs located within the retail environment are typically designed to explicitly communicate information to consumers such as directions (for example, exits), store policies and rules of conduct (Bitner 1992). However, signs can also hinder or facilitate identity-relevant actions. For example, Danaher and Argo (2018) find that when signs increase the salience of a consumer's identity when they are in the intimate process of trying on clothes in a fitting room (for example, a retailer writes the consumer's name on the fitting room door to communicate that the space is occupied) they will feel vulnerable. In this case the identity-relevant sign inhibits consumers from completing the action as they originally intended to do (that is, feel safe and secure while trying on clothes). In contrast, the authors find that when signage outside a fitting room door is not identity-relevant (that is, a "Do Not Enter" sign), the presence of the sign is beneficial, as consumers are able to try on their clothes in privacy as intended. A second example of how signs can be action-relevant is when they are used to explicitly communicate store policies to consumers. In doing so, signs can communicate how the self is expected to behave (that is, the ideal self) by making explicit the rules of how to be a "good" citizen in that space. Failure to behave in an action-relevant way (that is, choosing to ignore store policies) has been shown to result in other consumers punishing the deviant individual (for example, refusing to offer help when it is needed; Lin 2013). Thus, behaviors that violate the appropriate actions communicated in signage, as well as signage that increases the salience of one's identity when privacy is sought, can have negative ramifications for consumers.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

While research discussing and testing the influential nature of the retail environment dates back several decades, there remain a number of opportunities for future research from the perspective of identity. In this section of the chapter I discuss four directions for future research that I believe would be interesting to pursue.

Ambient Elements

While research has explored how ambient features influence a store's image, future research could also explore how these features impact

identity-relevant behavior. For example, given that scent is most closely tied to emotional memory (Herz 2004) it seems likely that this sensory cue might be able to bring to mind past identities. When entering a store that has a scent that is reminiscent of a different time and identity (for example, as a carefree child), does this influence shopping behavior? Are consumers more open to fun, childish alternatives, more likely to make affect-based decisions, and ignore risk? Similarly, would consumers respond differently if music from high school were playing on the retailers' speakers, making salient perhaps an identity linked to a reckless or self-loathing teenager. At a broader level, can ambient features make past identities (both desirable and undesirable) accessible and relevant, and do they in turn influence consumption behaviors?

Lighting is another ambient feature that could be expected to influence the salience and thus relevance of an identity. Indeed, as the lights go down this can obviously impair vision, but does it also change the identities that are accessible? Does this allow consumers to hide or obscure current identities and allow for more deviant identities to arise, as consumers are now in essence behind a mask? Does this increase the likelihood of deviant behaviors such as shoplifting, excessive alcohol consumption or risk-taking behaviors? Preliminary laboratory research would suggest so, as dim illumination was found to increase the likelihood that people would cheat (Zhong et al. 2010). What happens when the lights are made brighter? Does this make our behavior more salient not only to others but also to the self? Would this increase the likelihood that we activate a "good consumer identity" and increase donations, tipping behaviors and choices of environmentally sustainable goods? Understanding the relationship between ambient features and identities is a fruitful direction for future research.

Retail Identity Versus Consumer Identity

As discussed earlier, companies create store identities through elements of the retail space. While this is one area of the literature that has received some attention already, there remains a great deal that we do not understand. For instance, when you enter a retail space, is the store's identity bestowed upon you? Is this more likely to happen for those who already see that identity as congruent to one they hold (for example, a high-status individual entering a high-status environment) or, alternatively, for those who aspire to have that identity (for example, a low-status individual entering a high-status environment)? Does it matter if the aspirational identity that is being sought is permanent or only temporary? For instance, when does an overworked and extended mother who goes to a spa (with a quiet,

calm, “anything but mother” environment) perceive the experience as a reward, or feel guilty? Does it depend on the extent to which she allows her identity to temporarily change (rather than remain as a “mother”)? Finally, what about environments that risk conveying an undesirable identity on consumers, such as second-hand stores (for example, Goodwill), which can signal cheapness and being poor; or health-testing clinics which might impose a disease-related identity on the consumer? What happens if a consumer enters these stores at the request of another person, as opposed to at their own volition? Does the likelihood that the store identity impacts consumers change when they can attribute their patronage to others? There are a multitude of different ideas that could be tested to understand how a store’s image imposes identities, and how they affect the consumer.

Shopping Basket Composition

While research has focused on shopping basket content from the perspective of signaling embarrassing identity-relevant information to others (Blair and Roesse 2013), future research could explore how the composition of the shopping basket can be a signal to the self. Do people construct identity-relevant baskets? Can the content of a shopping basket serve as a reflected self? Does the order in which we add items to the basket influence subsequent product choices, as the first product choice might activate a given identity, and subsequent items may be congruent or incongruent with this identity? For instance, if the first items into a shopping basket are protein powder or power bars, would this influence the likelihood that a bag of potato chips will follow? While potato chips are incongruent with most people’s notions of an athletic identity, perhaps the athletic identity can be “fulfilled” with the initial product selections and this will allow for another identity to become relevant (for example, “Friday night party animal”). The information that shopping basket composition signals to the self about one’s identity would be an interesting avenue to explore.

Going it Alone: Self-Checkout

With the increase in technology in retail settings such as self-checkout and self-scanning, it would be interesting to understand how this affects identity. Being given the independence to scan and bag one’s own products in the absence of company intervention might lead to a number of identity-related responses on the part of the consumer. For instance, self-checkouts might increase our perceived self-control (we can do it alone), increase a signal of tech-savvy (“I am so in the know”), decrease our sense of connection with others (and enhance a sense of isolation), or increase one’s

perceived anonymity (if no one interacts with you it is like being invisible). What happens if there are problems at the checkout? It seems that inevitably when using a self-checkout there is something in your basket that requires assistance by a store manager to authorize what you are doing. Does this have ramifications for the self? Each of these different outcomes likely has its own set of distinct outcomes, and it would be interesting to understand when and why one response is more likely than others from an identity perspective.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I proposed that features in both the physical and social retail environments can be identity-relevant to a consumer, and as such they will influence the consumer's thoughts, feelings and behaviors. I provided evidence in support of my proposition by linking findings in the bricks-and-mortar retail literature to a dimension of identity relevance (that is, object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance and action relevance). Finally, I concluded by highlighting four broad areas for future research. Such investigations may shed valuable insight into the relationship between the retail environment and identity.

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28. Identity and charitable giving: the six-self framework

*Jen Shang**

INTRODUCTION

The United Nation 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was developed to solve some of the most significant social problems facing our global community today (for example, ending poverty and hunger, producing clean water and sanitation for all, and reducing inequalities) (United Nations 2015). Charities play a significant role in delivering some of these ambitions. The degree to which charities can succeed, however, is very often correlated with how successfully fundraisers can raise charitable donations. This chapter explores the possibility that identity-based motivation can contribute to the success of fundraising and hence the social missions (Reed et al. 2012; Oyserman 2009).

Field experiments routinely show that identity-relevant manipulations can increase charitable giving by a minimum of 10 percent when they reinforce Christian identity (Shang and Sargeant 2018), moral identity (Shang et al. 2019) or organizational identity (Kong 2018). At the same time, identity-motivated giving is shown to change donors' sense of who they are (that is, identity) and how they prioritize the descriptors they use to define themselves (Shang and Sargeant 2018). Giving can also uplift and encourage people in a way that shrinks the gap between how moral they think they actually are and how moral they ideally would like to be (that is, giving shrinks moral identity discrepancy) (Shang et al. 2019).

These results suggest that identity and its associated identity processes (for example, adoption, definition and redefinition, continuous adaption¹

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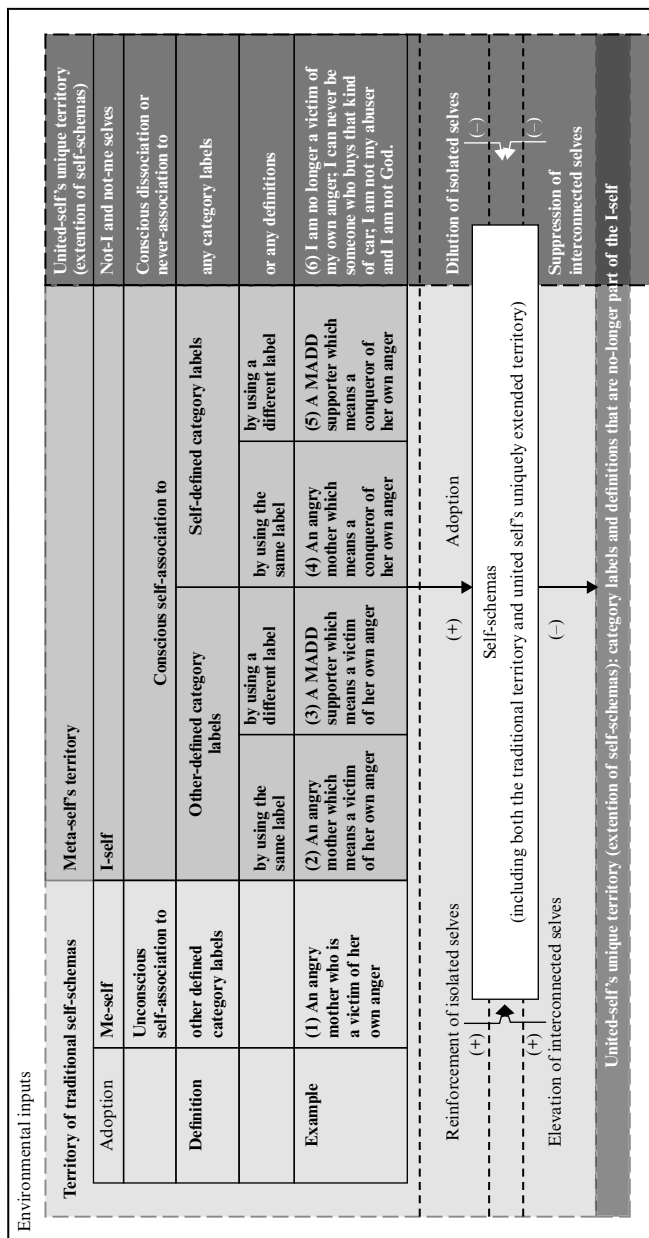
¹ Adoption is defined as “the process of bringing a new identity into the self-schema”; definition and redefinition is the process of assigning meaning to a new identity; continuous adaption includes four identity processes: reinforcement, “the process of strengthening an

and expulsion) have the potential to change giving, and vice versa (Reed and Forehand 2016). The identity relevance principle in Reed et al.'s (2012) theory suggests that the degree to which identity and identity processes influence giving, and the degree to which giving influences identity and its processes, may be partially determined by how relevant they are to each other: "When identity information is deliberatively processed, its influence will be greatest on stimuli that possess object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance, action relevance or evaluation relevance to the identity" (Reed et al. 2012, p. 316). My own research shows that the more relevant identities and their processes are to giving, the more likely it is that identity-motivated giving can enhance donors' psychological well-being (Shang and Sargeant 2018).

I introduce a six-self framework that builds on Reed et al.'s (2012) identity-based motivation framework by differentiating six types of the self (that is, the me-self/not-me-self, the I-self/not-I-self, the meta-self and the united self) (Erikson 1959; Erikson and Erikson 1998). It also builds on Reed and Forehand's (2016) framework by explicitly differentiating the process of self-association from self-dissociation and self-never-association, and the process of identity definition and redefinition (that is, how people define the identities when they adopt a category label as one of their identities, and how people redefine it afterwards) from other identity processes (for example, adoption, reinforcement, dilution, elevation, suppression and expulsion). Figure 28.1 summarizes all the components of this framework. All regular fonts are original labels borrowed from Reed and Forehand's framework. Some definitions of these original labels are amended in light of the six-self framework. All bold fonts are new labels. I will introduce the content in this framework sequentially.

I will first define the three elements of the self that have been studied in the past (me-self, I-self and meta-self) and what fundraisers can do with them. Then, I will explain why I think understanding the not-me-self, not-I-self and the united self can be useful; why the six elements together have the potential to drive behavioural change in a way that has the highest sustainability; and why behavioural change (for example, giving), when sustained this way, has the highest chance of maximizing donors' psychological well-being (Ryff and Keyes 1995; Ryff and Singer 2008).

identity over time when this identity functions in a single identity maintenance system, that is, the increase or decrease in its strength is not related to that of any other identities," dilution, "the process of weakening an identity over time," elevation, "the process of increasing the prominence of a given identity within a hierarchy of identities," and suppression, "the process of reducing the prominence of a given identity within a hierarchy of identities." Expulsion is defined as "the process of dispossession of an existing identity" (Reed and Forehand 2016, pp. 94–95).



Notes:

Identity processes of definition and redefinition of category labels, as well as the identity processes of adoption, reinforcement, dilution, elevation, suppression and expulsion, are represented.

The solid line shows how the environment that we live in can form a range of clear pictures of category labels. The light grey rectangular area marked by dashed lines outlines the territory traditionally included in the research of self-schemas.

All (+) and (-) signs can be combinations of bottom-up processes associated with me-selves and top-down processes associated with both I-selves and meta-selves.

Figure 28.1 The process of self-association, self-dissociation and self-never-association with a category label

Psychological well-being in our context is defined as donors feeling that: (1) their donations can make a meaningful difference in their mastery of the world (competence); (2) they have made the donation decision autonomously based on what is meaningful to them, not what is meaningful to most others (autonomy); (3) their donation decision connects them to others important to them (relatedness); (4) their giving experience allows them to grow their sense of who they are (growth); (5) their giving experience allows them to clarify and move forward their purpose in life (purpose in life); and (6) they experience a sense of holistic self-acceptance of who they are through giving (self-acceptance).

I hope a better understanding of these processes by fundraisers can help to reverse declines both in the donor population and in the longevity of typical donor relationships. A United Kingdom donor, for example, only supports an organization for 4.2 years (Sargeant 2018), and 70 percent of newly acquired United States donors will not renew their support into a second year (Sargeant and Jay 2014).

THE SIX-SELF FRAMEWORK

Reed et al. (2012, p. 310) made an important contribution to the literature on identity and consumer behaviour by providing a parsimonious definition of identity: “identity is defined as any category label to which a consumer self-associates that is amenable to a clear picture of what the person in the category looks like, thinks, feels and does.” Examples of identities in Reed et al. (2012, p. 312)² include:

objective membership groups (e.g., gender or family, as discussed in Epp & Price, 2008), culturally determined membership groups (e.g., ethnicity and religion, as discussed in Dong & Tian, 2009), abstracted role ideals (e.g., mother, friend, philanthropist), groups premised on association with a known individual (e.g., a graduate advisor), with an individual who is not known personally (e.g., Tiger Woods), or with dimensions of self that are indexed by an imagined other (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Ethier, 1995). Although there are many types of identities (as described above), it should be noted that a single identity term can bridge various classifications. For example, the term “mother” can refer simultaneously to a person’s status as a member of an objective group or as an abstracted role ideal, and it is premised on an association with a known individual (i.e., the focal person’s child or children).

Self, which is defined as self-schemas, can encompass multiple identities (Reed 2004; Reed et al. 2012), “whether objective and relatively stable (for

² For a complete list of the identities included please see Reed et al. (2012, Figure 3).

example, father, son, millennial, Hispanic, etc.) or transitory and fluid (for example, Apple user, Democrat, lawyer, athlete, etc.)” (Reed and Forehand 2016, p. 94). The solid lines around Figure 28.1 shows that the environment that we live in can be seen as waves of feelings, thoughts and actions that can form a range of clear pictures of category labels. The black dotted rectangular marks outline the territory traditionally included in the research of self-schemas.

ME-SELF AND I-SELF

In order for any environmentally available category labels or definitions to enter into the traditionally defined self-schemas, they must be adopted. That is, clear pictures must be unconsciously (me-self in example 1) or consciously (I-self in examples 2–5) associated to the self.

Me-self refers to the self/selves in which category labels are adopted unconsciously (that is, self-associated) and processed bottom-up. For example, an angry mother who has just lost her child in a car accident involving a drunk driver can look like an angry mother, think like an angry mother, feel like an angry mother and behave like an angry mother, yet never associate herself with an angry mother label or consciously define what being an angry mother means to her (example 1 in Figure 28.1). This angry mother me-self can be reinforced, elevated, diluted, suppressed or expelled without any top-down process to accelerate or impede what occurs in the neuro-system bottom-up (Kühnen et al. 2001).

I-self refers to the self/selves in which category labels are adopted (that is, self-associated) consciously and processed top-down (Voyer and Franks 2014; McAdams 2013). This perspective applies when an angry mother consciously associates herself with the angry mother label and recognizes that she looks, thinks, feels and behaves like an angry mother. When this self-association is consciously accepted, she can top-down define what it means. One definition could be that “I have become a victim of my own anger” (example 2 in Figure 28.1). She can then top-down accelerate or impede any of the processes (that is, reinforcement, elevation, dilution, suppression or expulsion) in the me-self that would otherwise occur in only a bottom-up fashion. Our me-selves and I-selves together match Reed et al.’s definition of identity, because they both exist as self-associations with category labels. Table 28.1 summarizes the differences between me-self and I-self.

When some of these me-selves are top-down influenced by I-selves through shared labels (example 4 in Figure 28.1), definitions (example 3) or both (example 2), I-selves can top-down accelerate or impede the

Table 28.1 *The differences between me-self and I-self*

	Self-association with category labels (adoption)	The processing of these category labels (i.e., reinforcement, elevation, dilution, suppression and expulsion)	Are these labels consciously defined for the individual?
Me-self	Unconscious	Bottom-up	No
I-self	Conscious	Top-down	Yes

bottom-up processes. For example, when I-self and me-self (example 1) share the same definition with the same label (example 2) or a different label (example 3)), I-self can top-down accelerate the elevation of the me-self. The I-self can choose to ruminate on the thoughts that “I felt angry,” relive events where anger has been expressed, and rehearse the association that “I am a victim of my own anger” (Beck et al. 1979). This rumination can continue long after the occurrence of the trigger event, and it reinforces the me-self in a way that is much stronger than what is possible with a bottom-up process alone (Andrews and Thompson 2009).

As another example, when I-self and me-self share only the labels but not the definitions (comparison between examples 1 and 4 in Figure 28.1), I-self can top-down impede (not accelerate) elevation. For example, as the mother begins to feel angry and shouts at her surviving family, her I-self can step in and rehearse the thought that “I can conquer my anger.” This thought can help the person to recognize that she may have failed this time, but she does not have to ruminate on the ideas or dwell on her failures. Instead, she can choose to apologize. In initiating the apology, her I-self top-down impeded the elevation that the angry me-self would otherwise receive bottom-up. When I-self and me-self share neither the labels nor the definitions (comparison between examples 5 and 1), the top-down and bottom-up processes are least likely to interface with each other.

Processes such as adoption, reinforcement, dilution, elevation, suppression and expulsion can occur as a combination of bottom-up and top-down processes. When only a me-self exists in isolation in the memory (that is, they are not connected to any other me-selves or I-selves in memory; for example, one’s gambling me-self may be an isolated self that has no association to any other parts of one’s life) in the self-schemas, bottom-up reinforcement and dilution determine whether a given me-self can become available in working memory to influence our looks, feelings, thoughts and behaviours. When multiple me-selves exist in the memory of self-schemas without any top-down influence exerted by the I-selves, bottom-up eleva-

tion and suppression processes ensure that the most salient, important and relevant me-self will come into working memory (Anderson et al. 2004; Reed and Forehand 2016). When me-selves and I-selves are connected, bottom-up and top-down processes jointly determine whether they are adopted (+), reinforced (+), elevated (+) or diluted (−), suppressed (−) and expelled (−). The (+) and (−) signs in Figure 28.1 show whether the overall strength of association increased or decreased as a result of these processes.

META-SELF

The meta-self refers to the self that consciously manages the conflicts between two or more I-selves that may be in competition with each other for resources such as attention, mental-processing capacities or actions (Bahl and Milne 2010). Figure 28.1 marks the territory of the meta-self: all possible I-selves. As some examples, this could include one's actual self, ideal self (Higgins 1987), moral self (Aquino and Reed 2002), authentic self (Johnson et al. 2004), true self (Schlegel et al. 2009, 2011), redemptive self (Guo et al. 2016), extended self (Belk 1988), collective self (Brewer and Gardner 1996), social self (Brewer and Pierce 2005) and fused self (Swann et al. 2012). These include whatever labels that the self chooses to consciously associate itself with and whatever definition it chooses to employ for these labels.

The content of the meta-self is not only the two or more category associations adopted and defined by I-selves, but also how they are in conflict and the momentary hierarchies of these I-selves. By definition, we assume that people can experience only one meta-self at any given moment, although the content of the meta-self can change continuously. Meta-self does not influence me-selves unless it is through I-selves. All (+) and (−) signs as shown in Figure 28.1 hence can be combinations of bottom-up processes associated with me-selves and top-down processes associated with both I-selves and meta-selves.

At any given moment, the meta-self maximizes cohesion and minimizes conflicts between I-selves. In doing so, it maximizes the individual's social functions (McAdams 2013; Bahl and Milne 2010) and psychological well-being (Ryff 1995; Ryff and Singer 2008). When conflicts cannot be resolved, the meta-self establishes the dominant I-self by consciously elevating, suppressing or expelling other competing I-selves.

We will use the relationship between donors and an organization called Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) to clarify what the meta-self is and what function it plays. MADD's mission is to "end drunk driving,

help fight drugged driving, support the victims of these violent crimes and prevent underage drinking” (MADD n.d.). Many MADD supporters have lost their loved ones in car accidents involving impaired driving. They joined MADD to reduce such deaths to zero.

A mother, for example, may have lost her two-year-old son about a month ago and joined MADD immediately after that. One month after this trauma, she may consciously self-associate with both an angry mother category label which is defined as the victim of one’s anger (example 2), and a MADD mother category label which is defined as the conqueror of one’s anger (example 5). Whenever she feels angry and is about to blow up at the smallest irritation her surviving five-year-old daughter creates, her meta-self chooses which I-self to give dominion: the victim who will express anger, or the conqueror who will turn on her favourite music and calm herself down before she reacts. This is how the meta-self works when there is no overlap between the I-selves in labels or in definitions (as in the case of examples 2 and 5).

When there is overlap between the multiple I-selves, bottom-up processes may also resolve conflicts unconsciously, joining the meta-self’s top-down processes. For example, when a mother first joins MADD, she may define herself as a victim of her own anger. But she is not sure whether that definition is most appropriately paired with an angry mother label (example 2) or a MADD supporter label (example 3). Both I-selves hence may exist for a few months as she figures it out. For as long as the two labels share the same definition, the two I-selves and their associated me-selves (the me-self that shares the same label, the same definition or both with the I-selves) may interface with each other in bottom-up and top-down processes. The result of these processes is that these selves may end up with varying degrees of dispositional centrality, situational salience and relevance in determining how the person feels, thinks and acts (Reed et al. 2012; Reed and Forehand 2016). The meta-self only top-down accelerates or impedes I-self-related processes, and then I-selves can top-down accelerate or impede me-self-related processes.

HOW CAN FUNDRAISERS UTILIZE THIS KNOWLEDGE TO INCREASE FUNDRAISING SUCCESS?

Me-Self and Giving

Fundraisers can first map out the most relevant self-transitioning journeys that their potential and existing donors may go through when they make

decisions about supporting or remaining with the organization. For example, a mother, after losing a child to drunk driving, can unconsciously self-associate with an angry mother identity (example 1). Because this is a new set of feelings, thoughts and actions that emerged after her child's death, her me-self probably unconsciously adopts the category label of an angry mother without necessarily her I-self consciously recognizing the clear picture or the association during the few months after the death.

This angry mother me-self can be unconsciously reinforced (that is, it is strengthened in memory but no other me-selves are strengthened or weakened), or elevated (that is, it is strengthened in memory and other opposing me-selves are weakened) every time she expresses anger and feels comforted afterwards, or unconsciously diluted (that is, it is weakened but no other me-selves are strengthened), or suppressed (that is, it is weakened while other me-selves are strengthened) every time expressing anger does not lead to any desirable consequences (Reed and Forehand 2016; Anderson et al. 2004). A vast literature shows that the me-self and its associated unconscious processes can influence behaviour (for example, giving), and vice versa (McAdams 2013; Reed et al. 2012).

Tapping into the knowledge on the me-self, fundraisers can grow giving by growing me-self's situational salience, dispositional importance and relevance to the decision at hand (Reed and Forehand 2016). An advertisement slogan, for example, can be designed to prime the feelings and the behavioural patterns of the angry mother identity me-self without calling out the category label: "Feeling like screaming in anger? You are not alone! Join 500 other mothers who lost their sons and daughters for a night of sharing this weekend."

Before a donor consciously associates herself with a relevant category label or consciously defines what that label means to her, we hypothesize that this advertisement will be more effective if it taps into the unconscious feelings (for example, "Are you feeling angry most of the time?"), thoughts (for example, "Are you at a loss as to how to cope with losing a child to drunk driving?") and behaviours, without highlighting the category label. This is because doing so may appear either irrelevant or even false to them. It may put them off because they may consciously think, "I am not an angry mother. I am not a victim of my own anger."

Fundraisers should not feel bad about utilizing these techniques in attracting potential donors, especially during the time when some of them are going through probably the worst trauma in their lives. This is because they understand the value that their network can offer for these mothers. For example, after attending the first few MADD events, the bottom-up process may allow these mothers to unconsciously associate with a MADD supporter me-self that feels, thinks and behaves more like a conqueror

than a victim (this me-self is not marked in Figure 28.1 due to space constraints). They accomplish this unconscious me-self transition by mimicking what other MADD mothers do. This transition through mimicry can be hugely beneficial for these mothers and increase their psychological well-being (Hill et al. 2014).

I-Self and Giving

Until when a mother consciously recognizes the difference between the definitions of the two labels, a top-down process from the MADD-mother-conqueror I-self cannot exert any top-down influence into the bottom-up process to elevate the corresponding me-self. Fundraisers' job hence is to detect as soon as possible when that unconscious transition occurs, and help the conscious adoption of the new MADD label and MADD definition as soon as they think the new me-self is ready, so that the new I-self can help to speed up the helpful transition process.

If fundraisers can map out the typical trajectory and timeline of how these types of self-transitions occur for their donors, they can care for their needs and deepen their connection with the organization more effectively (Shang et al. 2019). For example, fundraising communications can have an outer envelope for a fundraising event invitation to say: "You have done it! You have beaten Anger. Now, let's live in a MADD way! Open the invitation and find out how!"

We hypothesize that this invitation should have a higher open rate than any other invitations that make salient only one self in isolation at a time (for example, "Are you angry?" "Are you a victim of anger?" "Have you won your battle against anger?" "Are you living in a MADD way?"). This is because it captures the transition process that occurred, not only the starting or the ending point of the transition. It has the potential to make people feel understood and cared for (Nelson 2018). If these transitions only just occur unconsciously as me-self transitions, we hypothesize, the success of this type of invitation can be higher as measured as the facilitation of conscious I-self transitions. If these transitions occur consciously as I-self transitions, we hypothesize, the success of this type of invitation can be even higher, measured as response rate to the mailing.

Given that, fundraisers should also be aware that the conscious adoption of a category label (that is, the adoption of an I-self) does not automatically or immediately expulse the angry mother me-self or terminate any me-self-related processes (for example, reinforcement, elevation, dilution or suppression). It does, however, have the potential to accelerate or impede processes that are only bottom-up. For example, people's MADD-supporter I-self (defined as a conqueror) can choose to go to MADD

gatherings even when their angry-mother me-self (defined as a victim) does not feel like attending.

In doing so, they may meet others and learn how MADD supporters differ from angry mothers. Every time they feel anger, it is more likely that they know they can conquer it, and it is more likely that they will behave differently. This means that even though the feeling can still unconsciously trigger their angry-mother me-self as a victim, the thoughts and the behaviours that follow can be more and more often based on the definition of who a MADD-supporter is as a conqueror. If the behaviour is carried out, the MADD-supporter I-self is elevated, whereas the angry-mother me-self is suppressed. This elevation and suppression process may be conscious at the time of the person fighting between behavioural options in her own head, but can become unconscious as such reflection becomes more automatic and takes less conscious reflection. Neither requires the involvement of the meta-self, because it is a fight between a me-self and an I-self, not two or more I-selves.

The ultimate benefit, I think, for fundraisers to use fundraising communications to empower their donors with this kind of reflection on their self-transition is not only that they can more sustainably raise funds for their social causes. Rather, it is that they ensure their donors do so for the right reason, by growing the relevance of their causes to their donors' sense of who they are. That is, they grow the kind of giving that is motivated by the right I-selves. And it is almost by definition that this kind of giving is more reflective of personal goals, values and desires (McAdams 2013; Frankl 1985). It can increase donors' sense of competence in mastering their environment (for example, by consciously identifying more effective coping mechanisms through interacting with other MADD supporters), attaining a higher degree of autonomy (that is, by adopting definitions that are most meaningful to the individual), and having a better sense of personal growth (for example, as the most meaningful I-selves are consciously reinforced and elevated, and the least meaningful me-selves consciously or unconsciously diluted and suppressed (Ryff 1995; Ryff and Singer 2008).

Meta-Self and Giving

Up to this point of the unconscious adoption of a new MADD-supporter me-self as a conqueror, and a conscious adoption of a new MADD-supporter I-self as a conqueror, the meta-self has not exerted any top-down influence other than continuously monitoring whether any new I-selves may have been adopted. This is because any new I-self adopted may pose the potential for conflict that it may be required to manage.

When the meta-self detects that a MADD-supporter I-self defined as

a conqueror (example 5) is adopted, it begins to monitor how that may conflict with the MADD-supporter I-self defined as a victim (example 3). If the meta-self determines that the conqueror definition allows the mother to experience higher psychological well-being, then it can accelerate the elevation of the MADD-supporter I-self defined as a conqueror (example 5), and the suppression and expulsion of the MADD-supporter I-self defined as a victim (example 3). The meta-self does so by giving dominion to the former whenever possible (for example, allowing the MADD-supporter I-self to determine whether and how often to attend MADD meetings, and how she reacts to minor irritations despite how the angry-mother I-self might feel, think or attempt to behave).

In order to effectively use this knowledge, fundraisers will again have to assess when typical donors of theirs might be struggling with this kind of choice. Once detected, they can design more targeted digital communications to help them cope better and give more sustainably. For example, fundraisers can relate to the frustration and tiredness that some of the mothers might experience (that is, their meta-self constantly battling and choosing between two I-selves) by sharing social media advice: “Tired of choosing between winning or losing your battle against anger? MADD supporters have five tips that they can share with you.”

In doing so, fundraisers have also taken the concept of “identity relevance” to a more nuanced level. It is no longer only about being relevant to any one self in isolation. Fundraisers can make giving decisions relevant to facilitate the kind of me-self, I-self and meta-self transitions that donors may go through in order to achieve better psychological functioning. When applying the identity relevance principle as an amateur, fundraisers may tap into only one relevant identity at a time (that is, an angry mother, however defined) along one dimension at a time (that is, object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance, action relevance or evaluation relevance). But once fundraisers differentiate me-self, I-self and meta-self, identity relevance can be used in a more subtle way to facilitate me-self and I-self transitioning and meta-self functioning.

NOT-I-SELF, NOT-ME-SELF AND UNITED SELF

What is shared by me-self and I-self is that a self-association between a category label and the self must occur. What remains unaccounted for, however, is what happens to the category labels that are consciously dis-associated (for example, “I can never be someone who drives the same kind of car as the one that killed my five-year-old”), expelled (for example, “I am no longer a victim of anger”) or can never be associated (for example,

“I am not my abuser and I am not God”) (example 6, Figure 29.1). Can the conscious decision to dis-associate and never-associate allow those category labels to function in ways comparable to those category labels that become an I/me-self? If so, is there any value in extending the territory of traditional self-schema research into one that includes them?

It is possible that not all such category labels are of relevance. For example, once a mother recognizes that she is no longer a victim of anger, that I-self or me-self is probably best to be deleted from memory, never to surface again. No further bottom-up or top-down processes should be wasted on further processing of that sense of self. But there might be other category labels that, even though people know they are singularly unhelpful, they just cannot leave them out of their memory (for example, “I can never be someone who drives that kind of car”). But there must be ways that the processing capacity wasted on it can be reduced to minimum.

Finally, there may be dissociation and never-association labels that can help to increase psychological well-being. “I am not my abuser” gives the individual confirmation that they have won the most significant battle in how they could define their lives: not becoming their abuser. Is it possible that a confirmation of what they are not is as significant (if not more significant) as a confirmation of who they are (for example, a good mother)? Is it possible that our understanding of the self should include both how people define who they are and how people set boundaries as to who they are not? Can these two ways of defining the self provide different functional advantages when it comes to growing psychological well-being? If so, what kind of framework would allow us to understand them? What if the following are introduced: not-I-self and not-me-self? Not-I-self refers to the selves in which the adoption of category labels is consciously rejected on a temporary or permanent basis; and not-me-self refers to the selves in which the adoption of category labels is unconsciously rejected on a temporary or permanent basis.

What makes these category labels part of our sense of self is the reality that these rejected category labels can shape our sense of who we are in ways similar to our I/me-selves. They do so through the same processes such as adoption, definition and reinforcement. It may, however, be necessary to assign a different territory of the self for the existence and the management of these selves. I propose to term that space the “united self.” The united self is the self that consciously manages the paradox existing between self-associated and not-self-associated category labels that operate in mutually opposing ways.

Due to space constraints I will not go into detail about whether there is evidence to show that these distinctive components of the self exist, or why they must be labelled and defined separately. Nor is there space to explore

why we cannot simply call them something that the I/me-self can handle (for example, the rejected self), or explain why they cannot exist as continuums of the I/me-selves. Details on that can be found in Shang (2019). I will here only moot the potential benefits of studying these components of the self for fundraisers.

HOW CAN NOT-I-SELF, NOT-ME-SELF AND UNITED SELF HELP FUNDRAISERS?

It can be helpful for fundraisers to know that I/me-self and Not-I/me-self, although opposites in labels, are not necessarily opposites in definitions. For example, I/me-Self can have one label (for example, an angry mother) and one definition (for example, a victim of my anger). The Not-I/me-self, however, can refer to anything as long as it is not an angry mother defined as a victim of her anger. Not-I/me-self may even have no definition at all. This could be because a definition is not possible (for example, what does “I am not God” mean?), the attempts to define them are too painful (for example, what does it mean to be an abuser, so that you can say you are not an abuser?), or it is simply complicated and takes a lot of processing capacity to accomplish (for example, “I am not an angry mother” can mean that I am a conqueror of anger, tolerant of anger, or some combination of both).

It is my hypothesis that the level of complexity inherent in the definition of the not-I/me labels is almost always greater than in the definitions of the I/me-labels. Realizing this allows fundraisers to recognize the challenge they may face if they must work with such aspects of self. For example, in the United States the Heritage Foundation’s mission is to “formulate and promote conservative public policies based on the principles of free enterprise, limited government, individual freedom, traditional American values, and a strong national defence” (Heritage Foundation n.d).

Supporters of the Heritage Foundation may define themselves politically as a Republican or as not-liberal or not-Democrat. Those defining themselves as a Republican may be more receptive to fundraising messages that are designed to strengthen their conservative values than those defining themselves as a not-Democrat. This is because a Republican I-self is more clearly defined and can be precisely elevated by what the Heritage Foundation does, whereas a not-Democrat may have multiple meanings (one of which could be that I am simply angry with the Democrats at the moment). Giving by the not-Democrats may thus be motivated by a more complex array of reasons than giving by Republicans. I think fundraising communications can be designed more effectively if fundraisers can detect the most appropriate category label that their supporters accepted as well

as rejected, and assess which ones are more important to them and more relevant to the decisions at hand.

Recognizing that people's sense of self may be defined by opposing selves is also important, because people do attempt to create a more harmonious unity in their united self. Here, fundraisers can apply the identity relevance principle to tap into the harmonious existence that unites people's opposing selves. Amnesty International, for example, is "the world's leading human rights organisation, campaigning against injustice and inequality everywhere" (Amnesty International n.d.). Its supporters can define themselves both as someone who does not tolerate human rights abuses, and someone who feels for the family and friends of those whose human rights are abused.

The loving-self they have for those who suffer may engender a tender, caring tendency in their behaviour, while the no-tolerance-towards-abuse-self they have for the abuser may endanger a fighting spirit in guiding their behaviour. The balance between the two may best characterize who a mature Amnesty supporter is. My hypothesis is that fundraising communications can be more effective if fundraisers can characterize all relevant selves that include both their supporters' I-selves and their not-I-selves, rather than only a subset of them.

It is also possible that fundraising messages tapping into how the united self strikes a harmonious balance in defining who the supporter is, and how their holistic sense of who they are determines what they do for Amnesty, would be more effective than those that touch on all the separate components in isolation. A balanced fundraising message that acknowledges the two, for example, could read: "The fight will be long and daunting, but for the sake of those imprisoned we have to say no to human rights abuse until it finally comes to an end." The first half of this message touches the loving-self and the second half touches the no-tolerance self. And the harmony the united self drives is one in which Amnesty supporters fight for as long as necessary to care for (and express their love for) the abused.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I explained how the I/me selves and meta-self can help to raise more sustainable charitable income and grow donors' psychological well-being. I also mooted the possibility of exploring the not-I/me selves and the united self, and hypothesized what their potential value may be in reaching the same goals. The successful application of much that I suggest in this chapter is contingent on fundraisers' ability to understand their donors at a deep level and in real time. Without the digital revolution,

these ideas would be difficult to operationalize and implement, but as organizations increasingly interact with donors in real time, the ability to hyper-personalize communication is now a reality. Nonprofits now have a significant and meaningful opportunity to enhance the quality of the donor experience and grow both individual giving and personal well-being as a consequence.

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29. Children's materialism and identity development

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Identity formation is a crucial part of child development. Children attempt at a very early age to understand their place in the world as unique individuals. With age, children develop social-cognitive skills that allow them to understand that they have thoughts that are different from those of other children (theory of mind; Wellman et al. 2001). This skill allows children to understand that they are different from others on many dimensions, including what they aspire to, and what they believe is important. This understanding forms the basis of identity development, as children begin to understand that there are numerous ways to communicate what they value, as well as who they are and who they are not. Examples include what they say (their attitudes and beliefs), what they do (their behaviors), with whom they affiliate (their social circle), and through their possessions (as both self-signals and other-signals).

In this chapter, we adopt Reed et al.'s (2012) conceptualization of identity as salient category labels with which a person self-identifies, and we refer to the consistent overemphasis on using the cultural and symbolic values of possessions as a non-verbal means of signaling a desirable identity to the self and others as "materialism." Although most definitions of materialism do not specifically link identity and materialism, recent conceptualizations make this link explicit. For example, Shrum et al. (2013, p. 1180) have defined materialism as "the extent to which individuals attempt to engage in the construction and maintenance of the self through the acquisition and use of products, services, experiences, or relationships that are perceived to provide desirable symbolic value."

There are two key components of this definition that form the basis of this chapter, and directly link identity and materialism. The first pertains to the construction and maintenance of the self (identity); the second is the

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emphasis on symbolic value that possessions provide. Unlike words and deeds, which are relatively direct indicators of identity, possessions foster identity construction and maintenance through their culturally shared symbolic meaning. This definition also considers behaviors as indicators of materialism, and specifically the extent to which they reflect identities, and thus the definition departs from other conceptualizations that view materialism as a personal value system or even an identity itself (Kasser 2002; Richins and Dawson 1992).

In this chapter, we group the discussion of how materialism develops and the role identity plays in terms of socialization and psychological factors that influence materialism. Socialization factors include parents, peers and media. Psychological factors focus on fundamental identity motives such as self-esteem, power and belongingness (Vignoles et al. 2006; Williams 2007). Although socialization and psychological factors have independent effects on the development of identity and materialism, socialization factors also impact the psychological factors. In particular, we discuss what factors make particular aspects of identity salient, and how identity salience influences identity-relevant consumption (what Reed et al. 2012 term the “identity salience principle” and the “identity relevance principle,” respectively). We conclude with recommendations for future research, identifying potentially fruitful research gaps.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND MATERIALISM

Understanding the root causes of a phenomenon provides a framework for reducing the phenomenon's negative effects and enhancing the phenomenon's positive effects. For materialism, the perspective has been almost exclusively one that considers outcomes to be negative (cf. Belk 1985; Kasser 2002; Richins and Dawson 1992), although recent research has taken a more open-minded perspective (Pieters 2013; Shrum et al. 2013, 2014). In fact, research on the antecedents of materialism is voluminous, and an exhaustive review of this research is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, the factors that have received the most attention are family and parental influence, peer influence, media, identity and insecurity (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002; Kasser et al. 2004). We have grouped these into socialization and psychological factors.

Socialization Factors

Socialization refers to the process of learning the norms, values and behaviors considered appropriate in one's social environment, allowing

individuals to become successful societal members (Mortimer and Simmons 1978). Within the broader construct of socialization, consumer socialization is the process of applying this knowledge to consumer situations (Ward 1974). Consumer socialization involves the acquisition of consumer-related values and beliefs, of which materialism is a central component (John 1999). There are different vehicles for consumer knowledge transmission (social influences), and the most important ones for children are parents, peers and media.

Parental influence

Parental influence begins at birth and thus represents the first powerful social influence, compared to peers and media, which come later. Children's values, attitudes and beliefs are at least in part developed by simple observation of parents and siblings, and thus materialistic parents tend to have materialistic children (Chaplin and John 2010; Goldberg et al. 2003). In addition, certain parenting styles influence children's adoption of materialistic values. Cold and controlling parents may cause children to adopt extrinsic goals such as material success and acquisition (Kasser et al. 1995). Similarly, material parenting (using material goods to express love or shape children's behavior; rewarding/punishing children using material goods) has an effect on later adulthood materialism (Richins and Chaplin 2015). Adults who grew up experiencing material parenting are more materialistic than their counterparts who did not. Adults who were rewarded with material objects as children are more likely to reward themselves the same way as adults, and also more likely to judge a person's success based on what the person owns. In contrast, parenting styles characterized as democratic and warm are associated with children motivated by intrinsic goals such as community values and affiliation (Kasser et al. 2004). Supportive parents have children who are less materialistic (Gentina et al. 2018b), and this effect is mediated by self-esteem (Chaplin and John 2010).

In addition to such direct influences, parental influence also occurs indirectly through family circumstances. Children who grow up in deprived environments may adopt particular values and beliefs as a means of coping. One example of deprivation is an unstable family environment. Children who come from disrupted families (for example, divorced/separated parents) display stronger materialistic values as adults, and are more likely to associate possessions with happiness, than do children from intact families (Roberts et al. 2003). Disrupted family environments are highly stressful, and children may seek refuge in material goods to distract from their stress and to compensate for lack of parental attention and warmth.

General economic deprivation is also related to the development of materialism in children. Adolescents from lower socio-economic (SES)

backgrounds are more materialistic than their affluent counterparts (Chaplin et al. 2014; Kasser et al. 1995), and low-SES children are more affected by branding and more likely to use possessions to fit into desired social groups and to maintain and project identities (Chaplin et al. 2014), compared to high-SES children. The relation between childhood SES and materialism can be explained in terms of life history theory, in which children growing up in resource-deprived environments adopt “fast” life strategies that are associated with greater impulsivity (for a review, see Durante and Griskevicius 2018). The negative relation between SES and materialism is also observed at a macro level. Children from generations growing up under adverse economic conditions are more materialistic than children from generations growing up under favorable conditions, and poorer countries tend to be more materialistic than richer countries (Kasser et al. 2004).

Peer influence

Peers are also a strong social influence, and heavily impact the consumption values of others. Peer influence is stronger for children who consider their friends as role models of appropriate consumption behavior (Churchill and Moschis 1979). In particular, being cool is paramount (Belk 2015), and coolness and popularity are associated with brands and possessions for children (Banerjee and Dittmar 2008; Belk 2015; Chaplin and Lowrey 2010). Peer influence on the development of materialistic values is particularly strong for children who have low self-esteem (Achenreiner 1997; Jiang et al. 2015). Peers are important social influences because they provide psychological support (Chaplin and John 2007, 2010), and greater peer support is associated with lower levels of materialism (Chaplin and John 2010; Gentina et al. 2018b), whereas higher levels of consumption-related peer pressure are associated with higher levels of materialism (Banerjee and Dittmar 2008; Jiang et al. 2015).

Media influence

Media influence identity construction in two interrelated ways. First, both advertising and entertainment media (movies) tell stories about people, in particular people's relations with possessions. Possessions are an important component of identity – what Belk (1988, p. 139) refers to as the “extended self” – and the portrayals of characters are typically idealized, at least in terms of heroes and aspirational groups (O'Guinn and Shrum 1997). Thus, advertising and entertainment characters portray identities that viewers want to emulate, and possessions are directly (advertising) or indirectly (entertainment) linked with these aspirational identities (Shrum 2012).

Another way in which media influence identity construction is by

impacting normative perceptions (O'Guinn and Shrum 1997). Apart from ideal portrayals, both advertising and television portray characters that fit societal norms; at least, norms consistent with the current dominant world view (Gerbner and Gross 1976). Combined with portrayals of aspirational identities, perceptions of normativeness reinforce the media message. Thus, with respect to the relation between people and their possessions, viewers come to believe that possessions are useful for identity construction and maintenance, and that they are essential and normal (Shrum et al. 2011).

The idealized, normative portrayals that advertising and entertainment provide lead to straightforward predictions that consumption of these media is correlated with the development of material values. Because advertisements glorify products, promise happiness and link products with success, then the more one views advertising, the more likely one is to develop materialistic values. For example, exposure to advertising is correlated with materialism in children (Chan and Prendergast 2007). Similarly, attention to and interest in advertising is positively correlated with materialism in children (Goldberg et al. 2003), and exposure to advertising is positively correlated with desire for food and toys (Smith and Atkin 2003). Preschool children exposed to advertising prefer material objects over more socially oriented activities such as playing with friends (Goldberg and Gorn 1978).

Viewing of the programs between the ads is also positively correlated with materialism in children (Chan and Prendergast 2007). This finding is consistent with the predictions of cultivation theory (Gerbner and Gross 1976), which suggests that the materialistic content of programs can cultivate material values, such as desire for luxury products (Shrum 1999; Shrum et al. 2005). Similarly, electronic media usage is also positively associated with materialism (Kamal et al. 2013; Rai et al. 2018).

Psychological Factors

In this subsection, we focus on internal, psychological factors that form the core of identity. These factors are variously referred to as identity motives (Vignoles et al. 2006), fundamental motives (Kenrick et al. 2010) and fundamental human needs (Williams 2007). In particular, we focus on three identity motives that have received considerable attention in materialism research – self-esteem, power and need to belong – and we review research that links these fundamental aspects of identity to materialism.

Material possessions are closely linked to identity (Belk 1988; Rustagi and Shrum 2017), and people often use possessions to signal to others important aspects of themselves (Berger and Heath 2007). This is particularly true when individuals experience threats to their identities. In such

cases, they attempt to bolster or repair their damaged identity, and one way is through consumption (Braun and Wickland 1989). Rucker and Galinsky (2013) and Mandel et al. (2017) refer to this process as “compensatory consumption.”

Both chronic and situational deficits in each core aspect of the self are associated with materialism. Deficits are self-discrepancies or gaps between the actual and the ideal self (Higgins 1989). Chronic deficits are specific to individuals and represent stable individual differences. For example, some people may have chronically low self-esteem, general feelings of powerlessness, or feelings of social isolation or loneliness. Situational deficits are not specific to individuals, but are specific to instances that occur in daily life. That is, regardless of dispositional levels of self-esteem, power or belongingness, individuals may experience momentary threats to core aspects of their identity (for example, being rejected from a group).

Self-esteem

Self-esteem refers to how people feel about themselves, and their general feelings of self-worth (Baumeister 1998), and deficits in self-esteem may motivate people to try to repair their self-esteem through symbolic signaling. Indeed, higher levels of materialism are associated with chronically lower self-esteem in adults (Richins and Dawson 1992). Similar findings have been observed for situational threats to self-esteem (Lee and Shrum 2012; Lee et al. 2017).

Early adolescence is a time of particularly heightened insecurity because children become more socially aware while also becoming more self-critical (Chaplin and John 2007). Therefore, fitting in with peers by having the right brands and possessions is important. Adolescence typically brings more identity-relevant brands and other material possessions that could be used for identity-signaling into a young person's life (for example, phones, cars, iPads, laptops, gaming systems) (Reed et al. 2012). Although older adolescents' identities are likely to be much more developed relative to younger adolescents, they still rely on material possessions to navigate their social worlds (for example, to signal in-group membership to self and others, to impress friends).

Consistent with this reasoning, higher levels of materialism are associated with lower self-esteem in children and adolescents. For example, Chaplin and John (2007, Study 1) linked insecurity to materialism in children 8–18 years old. They documented the natural development of self-esteem in children, with insecurity heightening during early adolescence then lessening by late adolescence, and found that materialism levels moved inversely with this self-esteem trend. Moreover, lack of parental or peer support can lower self-esteem, which can explain the negative relation

between parental and peer support and materialism reviewed earlier. In a study with 984 French adolescents (ages 13–18), both lack of parental support and lack of peer support were associated with lower levels of self-esteem, which in turn was associated with higher levels of materialism (Gentina et al. 2018b). Similar findings were reported by Chaplin and John (2010) with American adolescents.

There is also evidence of situational effects of self-esteem on materialism. Chaplin and John (2007, Study 2) experimentally boosted self-esteem for the same three age groups and assessed its effect on children's materialism. Boosting self-esteem significantly reduced materialism for all three age groups, and this reduction was strongest for the middle age group, which exhibited the lowest levels of self-esteem. These findings provide strong causal evidence of the effect of self-esteem on materialism, evidence that is lacking in correlational studies.

Power

Power refers to the extent to which individuals feel they have control over their lives and possess interpersonal influence (Anderson and Galinsky 2006; Keltner et al. 2003), and individuals who are chronically low on feelings of power are more materialistic (Kashdan and Breen 2007). Situational threats to power also impact materialistic behaviors. For example, when individuals' feelings of power and control were threatened, they engaged in more conspicuous consumption (Lee and Shrum 2012; Lee et al. 2017; Rucker and Galinsky 2008) and were willing to pay more for high-status products (Rustagi and Shrum 2019) compared to non-threatened individuals.

Despite clear links between power and materialism in adults, surprisingly little research has investigated this relation with children. One exception is the Gentina et al. (2018b) study discussed earlier. That study also documented the negative relation between feelings of personal power and materialism, consistent with the findings with adults. Moreover, as with self-esteem, power mediated the relation between parental and peer support materialism: higher levels of parental and peer support led to greater feelings of power, which in turn were associated with lower levels of materialism.

Need to belong

Humans have a fundamental need to belong (Baumeister and Leary 1995). Developing and maintaining relationships likely have survival benefits associated with mutual protection and sharing of resources (Buss 1990). Belonging is particularly important for adolescents, because they undergo important transitions. For example, the transition from elementary to high

school can be challenging for adolescents because often they must develop entirely new social relationships as well as manage existing ones (Chaplin and John 2010). Adolescents may no longer be able to rely solely on their existing social networks, which may foster feelings of loneliness and exclusion (Oswald and Clark 2003). Thus, when children feel they do not belong, or are not wanted as part of a group, they attempt to alleviate this aversive state, and one of the ways they can do this is through possessions. Indeed, peer pressure to have the right possessions (clothes, and so on) is associated with materialism (Banerjee and Dittmar 2008). Similarly, peer rejection is associated with higher levels of materialism (Dittmar 2008).

Lack of feelings of belongingness can cause children and adolescents to feel lonely, which also impacts materialism. For example, in a study of Chinese adolescents, loneliness was found to be positively associated with materialism (Fangjing 2017). That research also demonstrated the mediating role of psychological factors (in this case, loneliness) in the relation between parental support and materialism. Gentina et al. (2018a) reported similar findings regarding the relation between loneliness and materialism. In a study with French adolescents, they found that loneliness was correlated with materialism. However, the type of materialism fostered by loneliness depended on the strategies that adolescents adopted to cope with loneliness. Adolescents adopt both passive strategies (for example, through distraction, avoiding social contact) and active strategies (for example, cultivating more social relationships, being more aware of others) to cope with loneliness. The use of passive coping strategies was associated with higher levels of materialism through product acquisition, whereas the use of active coping strategies was associated with higher levels of materialism through sharing of possessions. Importantly, passive coping through product acquisition materialism was associated with lower well-being, whereas active coping through sharing materialism was associated with higher well-being.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Material possessions make children and adolescents happy, and are used for self-development (Chaplin and John 2007, 2010; Connell and Schau 2012; Kasser 2002), all critical elements to healthy development throughout childhood. What is unclear, however, is when and how children's desire for material goods turns from being useful for healthy identity development to being potentially very harmful. Research linking materialism and decreased prosocial behavior (for example, generosity) in children is beginning to surface (Chaplin et al. 2018a), but more work is needed to

fully understand the utility of using material possessions to achieve desired end goals, including identity development.

Although most research with children has focused on the importance of material goods in children's lives (Chaplin et al. 2018b; Chaplin and John 2007, 2010; Chaplin et al. 2014; Goldberg et al. 2003; Kasser 2002), experiences can also be materialistic when they are used to signal social status and popularity (for example, going to an Ed Sheeran concert, vacationing in Europe; Shrum et al. 2013). Thus, a useful research direction is to understand when, how and why experiences become part of children's identities. Recent research shows that younger children value possessions over experiences, but this preference gradually changes throughout childhood, culminating in a tendency to prefer experiences over possessions during adolescence (Chaplin et al. 2018b), similar to adults' preferences (Van Boven and Gilovich 2003).

Moving forward, it would be fruitful to better understand when children begin to use experiences for identity signaling (for example, deriving happiness from experiences because they signal social status, popularity), and to examine whether experience-focused materialism is associated with the same negative outcomes that have been linked to possession-focused materialism, such as decreased generosity (Chaplin et al. 2018a) and increased risky behaviors (Gentina et al. 2018a). The challenge for researchers is to develop more comprehensive and sensitive measures of happiness that capture both short- and long-term happiness, and to measure both momentary enjoyment as well as deeper meanings of happiness and self-brand connections derived from possessions versus experiences.

Gratitude is another understudied area. Grateful children are more generous and connected to their neighborhoods and communities, have happier relationships with their family and friends, and are more self-disciplined (Froh and Bono 2014). Gratitude is also associated with lower levels of materialism and risky behaviors. For example, Chaplin et al. (2018a) use values theory (Bilsky and Schwartz 1994) to argue for gratitude as a possible antidote for materialism. According to this theoretical framework, values are desirable, trans-situational goals that help to guide people's behaviors. However, some values are incompatible with each other, and actions to fulfill one may conflict with actions to pursue another. One of the major conflicts is between orientations of self-enhancement (pursuing success and dominance over others) and self-transcendence (accepting others as equals and being concerned for their welfare) (Bilsky and Schwartz 1994). Materialism is an example of a self-enhancement value, whereas gratitude is an example of a self-transcendent value (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). Therefore, values theory suggests a negative correlation between gratitude and materialism, because they represent opposing

value systems. Chaplin et al. (2018a) show that an intervention designed to encourage feelings of gratitude among adolescents (keeping a gratitude journal) decreases materialistic tendencies and increases generosity toward those in need. Their findings provide help to parents, educators and policy-makers by redirecting attention to the importance of taking a more proactive approach and looking for ways to instill gratitude both at home and at school.

Another area for future research is prospection, which is defined as the “ability to ‘pre-experience’ the future by simulating it in our minds” (Gilbert and Wilson 2007, p. 1352). Simulations of the future allow people to “preview” events and to “pre-feel” the pleasures and pains those events will produce. There are a number of benefits to acting with the future in mind (Suddendorf and Busby 2005). Of particular importance to identity, prospection benefits the self by aiding rational decision-making and self-control (Seligman et al. 2013), skills that are critical to keeping children’s impulsive tendencies toward materialism under control. Prospection can also help children and adolescents to cope with a variety of consumption scenarios, such as anticipating behaviors that will bring short-lived superficial peer acceptance versus long-term genuine peer acceptance. Prospection can be especially beneficial to adolescents, who often succumb to peer pressure because they let the past and present guide their present thinking (for example, “Many kids in school are wearing the newest Steph Curry sneakers so I need a pair”). What if the teenager simulated the future and could see that his current friends would not like him any less if he never got the new Steph Curry sneakers?

Children are not good at being future-minded (Atance and Meltzoff 2006), which may explain why adolescents appear to be so materialistic and engage in risky behaviors. Because marketing messages encourage immediate gratification, the ability to act with the future in mind may allow children to have more self-control over their desire to buy. Although children have difficulty prospecting (Atance and Meltzoff 2006; Russell et al. 2010), we have little knowledge of how to help children improve their prospection abilities. Thus, future research should investigate how prospection develops throughout childhood, and document the extent to which prospection can improve the ability to plan for a range of events and emotions across a range of consumer contexts (for example, the excitement that comes with purchasing a new toy versus the possibility that the toy will not be as fun to play with as was portrayed on TV). As is the case with other potential future research studies discussed in this chapter, the development of more engaging measures suitable for children is needed before researchers can move forward with hypothesis testing.

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30. Identity-based perceptions of others' consumption choices

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Consumers “wear many hats.” For example, Person A might identify as an academic, spouse, semi-skilled skier and cupcake connoisseur. Person B might identify as a Canadian, father, mentor and football enthusiast. Reed et al. (2012, p.312) note this rich complexity, defining an identity as “any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment.” This definition highlights the primacy of the “self” in consumer identity research, as well as the multitude of possible category labels. Indeed, identity has traditionally been studied at the level of the self: how consumers’ own beliefs about their various identities influence their choices, values and purchase behavior.

Although a necessary starting point, we challenge the notion that consumer identity is solely a self-based phenomenon. Rather, identities exist within a social context: they can both be signaled (actively and passively) by “actors” and perceived by “observers.” For example, someone from Wisconsin may take pride in his Midwestern heritage and choose to wear a Green Bay Packers jersey on the weekend. An observer may infer that this person is a football fan. Likewise, a wealthy couple may choose to live in a modestly-sized home because they are members of the voluntary simplicity movement. Observers may infer that the couple is either environmentally conscious and/or (incorrectly) lower-income. These examples highlight how identity-linked consumption behavior simultaneously: (1) reinforces actors’ own identities; and (2) provides observers with information about actors’ identities (whether accurately inferred or not). Thus, while actors’ own beliefs about who they are influence their own consumption behavior, we propose that an actor’s perceived identity also influences how observers interpret and respond to the actors’ consumption behavior.

To the first point above, according to the identity relevance principle (Reed et al. 2012), consumers can actively reinforce identities via their product choices, political stances and time expenditures. Indeed, the signaling value of consumption choices has a long history in marketing (Belk 1988; Berger and Heath 2007; Escalas and Bettman 2005). This chapter builds upon this literature by discussing how consumers in the United

States (US), as observers, use identity-relevant information to evaluate actors' consumption choices, ultimately demonstrating that identical behavior can be evaluated differently as a function of actors' perceived identities. Although we use income and moral identities to illustrate these points, observer effects also likely play out with other consumer identities (as mentioned in the Conclusion).

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCOME IDENTITY

In order to actively participate in the modern, economic marketplace, consumers must have access to financial resources; virtually everything from basic necessities to luxury goods requires money. Where consumers live, their bank account balance and their position on the socio-economic ladder all reflect information about their "income identity." Even minimal facial cues provide information about social class. Recent research finds that observers categorize the faces of rich and poor actors significantly better than chance (Bjornsdottir and Rule 2017). As economic inequalities continue to rise worldwide (Alvaredo et al. 2018), being wealthy or poor has become even more pronounced to both the self and others. Thus, income identity is fundamental to how we understand and form impressions about consumption choices.

According to Reed et al. (2012, p. 312), any given category label becomes an identity "once the consumer has begun to incorporate it into his or her sense of who he or she is and has initiated the process to become that kind of person." Implicit in this definition is that the actor is incorporating desirable categories. When it comes to income identity, however, not all identities are desirable. Some identities may carry negative connotations from which consumers seek distance. Using Reed et al.'s (2012) definition of identity, we conducted a pilot study to examine the relative desirability of various income identities. American adults were randomly assigned to evaluate someone who is upper-class, middle-class, lower-class or a welfare recipient. Participants listed the first three words that came to mind, whether those words were positive or negative, and seven items capturing identity desirability (for example, "Being [category] is a desirable identity," "People want to be a member of [category]"). Results revealed that both lower-class and welfare recipient categories were considered negative identities to be avoided (see Lott 2002). Conversely, upper-class was considered neutral and middle-class was considered positive. (Upper-class was associated with both negative qualities such as being elitist and snobby, but also positive qualities such as being hard-working and successful, hence the neutral rating.)

There is an important point to be made regarding these findings. Unlike actor-based identity research, observer-based identity research does not require actors to incorporate the signaled identities into their sense of self. Recognizing oneself as poor or wealthy is irrelevant to observers' judgment of that identity. Moreover, observers may (whether warranted or not) ascribe identities to others and view them through a (potentially biased) lens.

Although we collected a handful of open-ended sentiments in our pilot study, past literature has identified a host of other associations linked to different income identities. Compared to high-income groups, low-income groups, especially those receiving government benefits, are perceived as having weaker moral values, work ethic and motivation (Bullock et al. 2001; Cozzarelli et al. 2001). Judgments toward adult welfare recipients are especially harsh, as this group is both disliked and disrespected (Fiske et al. 1999, 2002). These perceptions are due, in part, to a common belief (particularly in the United States) that hard work leads to material success, and that failure stems from self-indulgence and poor self-discipline (Mirels and Garrett 1971; Weber 1905/1958). Those who "choose" not to be hard-working violate this ideal and may be seen as deserving of hardship. From an attribution theory perspective, people attach meaning to choices that appear volitional (Jones and Davis 1965). Indeed, many Americans fall prey to the fundamental attribution error whereby they overestimate the importance of internal factors (for example, laziness) relative to external factors (for example, discrimination) in their judgments of low-income groups (Cozzarelli et al. 2001; Ross 1977).

These findings indicate that observers have an image of who low-income consumers and welfare recipients are. Next, we consider observers' reactions to what members of low-income groups do. Because consumers often exchange (non-)financial resources for goods and services, we propose that income identities are particularly salient in the marketplace and drive evaluations of (at least some) consumption choices. For instance, choices that require substantial resources may be perceived as inappropriate for low-income consumers who lack resources. Importantly, we propose that certain choices signal information about an actor's moral identity.

ETHICAL CONSUMPTION CHOICES: THE INTERSECTION OF INCOME IDENTITY AND MORALITY

From an actor standpoint, consumers' moral identity (for example, being caring, compassionate and fair) is central to who they are as human beings

and predicts engaging in a variety of prosocial behaviors (e.g., Aquino and Reed 2002; Reed et al. 2007; Winterich et al. 2009). Importantly, engaging in (im)moral actions has direct implications for impression formation. For example, morality is seen as fundamental to communicating one's social identity to others, as morality is viewed as less dependent on social context and more controllable than other traits (Goodwin et al. 2014). As humans, one of our strongest motivations is to be held by others in a positive regard. Given that our actions are readily perceived by others in moral terms (Wojciszke 1994), behaviors that communicate one's morality are a powerful means of impression management.

Moral identity and its associated traits are likely to be magnified when consumers make ethical consumption choices, which involve choosing products and services that do not harm or exploit humans, animals or the environment (Crane 2001; Doane 2001). These choices should have favorable implications for a consumer's perceived morality. Indeed, since ethical consumption benefits others (for example, production workers, the environment), consumers who make ethical consumption choices should be seen as "good" people. The same goes for consumers who make choices to volunteer (versus not): they should be seen as more moral.

Our own research examines perceived morality from an observer perspective. We propose and demonstrate that actors are seen as more or less moral, depending upon their perceived income identity, for the same ethical choice (Olson et al. 2016, 2018). Specifically, observers use an actor's income identity to draw inferences about what is and is not appropriate consumption behavior, as ethical choices are also typically more expensive than conventional alternatives (De Pelsmacker et al. 2005; Hughner et al. 2007). Because consumers must have additional resources to afford these choices, observers may use information about an actor's income identity to evaluate their choices, resulting in different judgments for the exact same choice, depending on the person.

When individuals draw moral inferences about others based upon ethical choices, our research suggests that they weight the prosociality versus cost elements differently depending on the chooser's income identity. Again, according to the identity relevance principle, observers may see some expenditures as more or less consistent with a given income identity. When wealthy consumers make ethical choices, they may be seen as more moral because the prosocial element overshadows the cost element. Observers may even expect wealthy consumers to be prosocial and provide for the underprivileged ("noblesse oblige"; see Ostrower 1995). Conversely, low-income consumers receiving government assistance (welfare recipients or aid recipients) may be seen as lacking sufficient resources to enact ethical choices. Spending their minimal resources on costly (albeit prosocial)

choices draws attention to how a welfare recipient should be spending their resources, ultimately lowering perceived morality. Indeed, aid recipients may be judged especially harshly: because government assistance comes from taxpayer dollars, consumers may view these individuals as misusing “their” money.

Next, we discuss a set of findings supporting our central hypothesis: ethical consumption choices polarize moral judgments based on the income identity of the consumer. Our research shows the same pattern of effects for both ethical choices that are more closely associated with income (for example, expensive organic food) as well as those that are less closely related to income (for example, donations of time), suggesting that the range of behaviors impacted by one’s income identity is quite broad and far-reaching.

Moral Judgments of Financial Resource Expenditures

Our first set of experiments focused on financial expenditures (Olson et al. 2016). The US participants were presented with a brief profile of a target (an “actor”) who had made a consumption choice. We manipulated the nature of that choice (for example, ethical versus conventional) as well as their income identity (for example, high-income earner, low-income earner, low-income non-earner receiving government assistance). Our primary dependent variable in most experiments was a four-item morality index.

Our first experiment focused on organic food. Participants were presented with a grocery list featuring eight items where three foods (carrots, milk and cereal) were labeled organic or not. The remaining five foods were held constant across conditions (see Haire 1950). A single statement above the shopping list indicated that it belonged to someone who had either been “receiving welfare for the past year” or “earning \$85,000 a year” (note that the top 25 percent of households in the United States report income greater than \$85,000; US Census Bureau 2011). Results revealed that while high-income earners were perceived as more moral for choosing organic (versus conventional) food, welfare recipients were perceived as less moral for the same choice. Costly expenditures are consistent with a wealthy income identity, but not with a welfare recipient’s income identity. These observer effects held when controlling for the list’s perceived healthiness, suggesting that mere differences in the perceived nutritional content were not driving results.

In another experiment not reported in Olson et al. (2016), we manipulated the food’s health value directly, rather than controlling for it. Results revealed that high-income earners were seen as more moral when purchasing healthy and organic food versus unhealthy and conventional food,

whereas welfare recipients were seen as less moral when they did the same. Interestingly, once the organic label was removed, welfare recipients were considered more moral for buying healthy versus unhealthy food. One of the goals of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps) is building a healthy America (US Department of Agriculture 2012). Thus, using government aid for healthy food, as long as it is inexpensive, may be viewed favorably and can lead to perceptions of being a “good” welfare recipient.

Next, we considered why wealthy consumers are rewarded for making ethical choices, but low-income consumers receiving government assistance are punished. We contended that a central driver of the denigration toward aid recipients may be observers' views that they are less deserving of ethical choice, relative to income-earners. Spending money received from taxpayer funds may come with an expectation of how that money is spent: people think it should be spent on affordable necessities. Applying the identity-relevance principle to this prediction, there is a strong association between the welfare recipient identity and expected frugality. This linkage implies that observers will respond favorably when welfare recipients are economical in their spending. When they choose to purchase costly products, this action contradicts observers' expectations of how someone receiving welfare benefits should behave. Even more fundamental, observers may believe that welfare recipients are unfairly benefiting from taxpayers' hard work, and consequently do not deserve freedom of choice in their purchasing decisions. Conversely, being wealthy is associated with earning money through paid employment, meaning that this group should be able to spend their money freely, any way they like.

We examined the deservingness mechanism in the US in two experiments featuring animal daycare services (that is, choosing to use a free kennel at home or a costly daycare service) and environmentally friendly vehicles (that is, choosing to rent a Toyota Corolla or a more costly Toyota Prius). We also separated the effect of income level (high versus low) from income source (earned via employment versus received via government assistance). Actors received \$12,000 a year in welfare benefits, or earned \$12,000 a year, or earned \$85,000 a year (\$12,000 represents the approximate poverty guideline for an individual in the US; US Department of Health and Human Services 2015). Results from both experiments revealed that, relative to welfare recipients, consumers who earn their income (whether \$12,000 or \$85,000) are seen as more deserving of ethical choices, which are then associated with higher morality. Moreover, deservingness was only related to morality when actors chose ethically, and unrelated when they chose the conventional option. Recall that ethical choices are both prosocial and costly. Thus, the ethical choice conveys direct information about a person's morality, whereas

the conventional option is simply the baseline; “deserving” the right to a prosocial choice is only relevant if the choice is costly.

We also examined whether the source of assistance changes observers’ perceptions of deservingness. When financial assistance is received from family or charity (versus the government), other consumers may perceive the individual as more deserving of having the right to choose how the money is spent. We conducted an experiment to test this prediction featuring an actor who donated to a charitable cause. We manipulated the source of the actor’s income, while holding the level constant (that is, the actor received \$12,000 a year from welfare benefits, or from a local charity, or from immediate family, or employment). Relative to consumers receiving welfare, those who received money from the other three sources were perceived as more deserving of spending freedom, which positively predicted morality. Hence, spending money received from the government is judged more harshly than spending other sources of income, even if such income is unearned. Perhaps the harsher judgments are also in part the result of welfare being more linked with one’s identity: a person becomes a welfare recipient once they are on welfare, but they are typically not known as a “charity recipient” when they receive money from a different source. It seems that being on welfare is more defining of one’s identity.

If welfare recipients are expected to make frugal consumption choices, one factor that should minimize criticism toward welfare recipients is price. We conducted two experiments manipulating: (1) the price of a single organic item; and (2) the prices of multiple organic items on a grocery bill. While wealthy earners were not judged differently depending upon whether organic item(s) were discounted, perceptions of aid recipients were more favorable when they purchased discounted (versus regular-price) organic items. Thus, removing cost from the equation reinforces the association between the welfare recipient identity and expected frugality. Similarly, describing aid recipients as cutting coupons and budgeting to save money minimizes stereotypes of being impulsive and irresponsible (Shepherd and Campbell 2018).

We next sought to test whether the moral judgments identified above also carry over to organizations who choose ethical products on welfare recipients’ behalf. In other words, do the identities of who the charity is trying to help change perceptions of what the charity is actually doing? Recall the roles of control and agency in moral judgments; many organizations (for example, food banks) provide food to individuals, such that recipients have little control over their own food choices. In this context, we predicted that attributions should shift away from the individuals receiving aid and toward the organization making food choices, since the latter possesses volitional control over the choices made.

Participants completed a series of studies for monetary payment. At the end of the session, participants were presented with a fictitious charity named “Helping Hands” that was described as either providing “meals” or “organic meals” to area families receiving government assistance. Participants were invited to make anonymous donations to the charity and complete a questionnaire that included measures of attitude toward the charity. Results revealed that participants viewed the charity more negatively when they chose to provide organic (versus conventional) food to families receiving government assistance, and as a result, donated less real money to the charity. These findings are important, as they highlight how a consumer’s income identity can spread its influence well beyond the self, ultimately having implications for other consumers and organizations, including those that want to help them. Studying such “cross-contamination” of consumer identities (or “cross-fertilization” in the case of more desirable identities) is a promising area for future research.

Moral Judgments of Non-Financial Resource Expenditures

Across a wide range of consumer purchases, we have found that aid recipients are seen as less deserving of ethical consumption choices compared to high-income counterparts. However, not all ethical choices require money. Although financial expenditures are more closely associated with one’s income identity, donations of time and other non-financial resources may be subject to similar criticism. Not only do observers associate welfare recipients with expected frugality, but they also associate this identity with being wasteful. Because the literature shows that aid recipients are generally viewed as lazy, dishonest and irresponsible (Brown-Iannuzzi et al. 2017; Gilens 1999; Henry et al. 2004), we considered whether all resource expenditures – not just those involving money – are scrutinized through this lens. In other words, we examined how the perceived wastefulness associated with aid recipients may carry over to color perceptions of everything they do, and not just their financial decisions.

We designed a second set of experiments to examine this prediction (Olson et al. 2018). First, we examined whether individuals evaluate ethical choices differently as a function of resource type. We predicted that low-income consumers receiving government assistance would be perceived more negatively than income-earning groups for giving the same resources (holding value constant) to charity. The target actor received welfare benefits, or earned the equivalent amount, or earned a higher amount. Participants in a control condition did not receive any income information. The actor then helped a charity by donating \$250, or volunteering for 35 hours (without pay), or donating \$250 worth of personal possessions.

Amounts were calibrated based upon the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour. Thus, working 35 hours for minimum wage would be valued at approximately \$250 (participants were unaware of this opportunity cost equivalence; see Reed et al. 2007).

Results supported our main prediction. Regardless of resource type, welfare recipients were perceived as less moral than low-income earners, high-income earners and the no-income control conditions. These latter three income groups did not differ. We found similar results when lowering volunteer hours from 35 to 15 in the time condition in a replication study. Together, these results demonstrate that aid recipients are considered less moral than income earners (and a no-income control condition) when spending equivalently valued resources, regardless of whether those resources are money, time or possessions.

Americans believe that aid recipients should be devoting the totality of their resources toward gaining economic independence (Henry et al. 2004); any expenditures that do not help to achieve this goal may be perceived as wasteful and less moral. However, this also implies that if additional information or cues are present to alter this overarching perception of wastefulness, then resource expenditures might be evaluated differently.

We examined the underlying wastefulness mechanism in two experiments. One way that perceptions of wastefulness could be mitigated is by changing the opportunity costs for a given expenditure (Spiller 2011). Given that aid recipients “should” be allocating resources toward achieving economic independence (Henry et al. 2004), volunteering time that could potentially lead to future employment should minimize perceived wastefulness and enhance perceptions of their morality. In one experiment, an actor volunteered each week at a museum without pay; the position was described as being either likely or unlikely to lead to future employment. Results revealed that welfare recipients were seen as less moral when they chose to volunteer for a position that was unlikely versus likely to lead to paid employment, and this was driven in part by perceptions of wastefulness. This judgment did not extend to low- or high-income earners. A follow-up experiment revealed that working for pay is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for moral credit. Low-income earners must work enough hours each week to minimize perceptions of time mismanagement.

In another experiment, we manipulated whether time spent volunteering was coupled with time spent improving one’s educational attainment, as pursuing higher education is one way to boost self-sufficiency and minimize future reliance on government assistance (Ma et al. 2016). Participants read about an actor who volunteered ten hours a week and was either currently taking online classes or not. Results revealed that aid recipients are seen as relatively wasteful, and as a result are viewed as

less moral when engaging in ethical actions. Importantly, this effect was weakened when the actor was actively taking college-level courses. These results highlight how judgments toward observed income identities can be mitigated by other identity perceptions (in this case, a student identity).

An individual's choice to give or not give, to volunteer or not volunteer, can influence outcomes for other stakeholders. In another experiment, we again shifted beyond the individual to consider implications for organizations. If aid recipients are seen as wasteful, then their fundraising efforts (on behalf of a parent organization) may be met with skepticism, and ultimately result in receiving less support. Participants were given an opportunity to contribute a portion of their participant payment to an (ostensibly) randomly selected GoFundMe campaign. Participants read that "Rob" either received government assistance or earned a wage. He had set a goal of raising \$5,000 for a museum where he volunteered. In addition to answering questions about perceived wastefulness, participants were asked if they would like to donate to Rob's campaign. Results revealed that Rob was perceived as more wasteful when he was a welfare recipient versus wealthy, and perceived wastefulness was negatively correlated with donation amount. In other words, individuals withheld their own financial resources to support a museum when the volunteer soliciting donations received welfare benefits.

CONCLUSION

Being a consumer involves exercising choice, including the choice to purchase (or not) goods and services. Choosing to wear your favorite team's jersey, eating ethnic cuisines and volunteering for a neighborhood watch are all choices that reinforce consumers' identities. Often, consumption choices are subject to public scrutiny: what we choose to wear, what we choose to eat and the activities we choose to participate in are observable. Consumption choices convey information about who we are as people, which means they can (and often do) elicit judgment from observers. An *Onion* (2014) article highlights this observer perspective with a story entitled, "Woman a Leading Authority on What Shouldn't Be in Poor People's Grocery Carts."

In this chapter, we build upon previous actor-based identity research by highlighting the impact of observer-based identity research. Our central thesis is that while actors' own beliefs about who they are influence their own consumption behavior, an actor's perceived identity also influences how observers interpret actors' consumption behavior. Observers might use any number of cues to infer information about actors' identities and

motivations (for example, clothing, vehicles, place of residence, choice of payment mechanism, and so on). Importantly, actively incorporating identities into one's sense of self is immaterial to observers' judgment of that identity. For example, Mr A might see himself as middle-class, but Ms B might infer that he is a welfare recipient when she sees him pay for groceries with an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card. Applying the identity relevance principle, Ms B may see Mr A's choice of organic produce as inconsistent with his perceived income identity. Our research demonstrates that the actor's (perceived) income identity is relevant information to observers' judgment because such choices (often, but not always) require significant resource investments (Olson et al. 2016, 2018). Mr A's ethical choices create a mismatch between his welfare recipient identity and its association with expected frugality. Ultimately, Mr A may be judged as relatively immoral for making costly, albeit prosocial, choices.

Observer-based identity research has implications for actors themselves and consumer-to-consumer interactions. For example, research demonstrates that observers use simple facial cues to infer social class, which influences judgments about actors' employability (Bjornsdottir and Rule 2017). For instance, observers believe rich targets are more likely to be hired as accountants than poor targets. This is an important finding, as it suggests that perceived income identity could have downstream consequences that perpetuate stereotypes of the poor as unemployed and unmotivated. Beyond actors themselves, our own research highlights potential consequences of income identity for firms, government agencies and non-profit organizations. For example, some states allow aid recipients to perform unpaid community service in exchange for aid (for example, Maine, Massachusetts) (Rector et al. 2016; Sullivan and Chieppo 2015). Our research suggests that such activities impact moral perceptions of aid recipients, which may also color perceptions of the sponsoring programs. Furthermore, given that employees are the face of their organization (Sirrianni et al. 2013), perceptions of aid recipients who choose to volunteer may have negative consequences for the parent organization.

We believe observer-based identity research is theoretically compelling and practically relevant, and hope our chapter provides a strong foundation for future work. One avenue to examine is the potential perception asymmetries between actors and observers. Actors may see themselves as possessing one identity, but observers may perceive something different. What are the implications for both the actor's own sense of self and actor-observer interactions when observers realize they were wrong in their characterization? Another promising avenue would be to examine the intersectionality among various consumer identities. Because different identities can be activated at the same time (Reed et al. 2012), judgments

may be influenced by the most salient identity at any given moment. Related to our own work on income identities, previous research indicates that racial identity is central to shaping (white) Americans' views of government assistance (Gilens 1999). People of color may receive even harsher judgments due to negative group stereotypes regarding work ethic and personal responsibility, although some perceptions may be changing as demographics shift (Fox 2004). Other identities may also play a role. For instance, the negative connotations of being a welfare recipient may be counteracted by the positive connotations of being a parent or caregiver. Relatedly, some identities are relatively stable (for example, race and ethnicity), while others might fluctuate (for example, income). Are some identity transitions perceived more favorably than others? Someone who goes from rags to riches might be held up as evidence of the "American dream"; someone who loses a job and faces foreclosure might be viewed negatively as making poor life choices. Studying identity transitions, and even how observers' own identities influence their reactions to others, is worthy of further investigation.

In sum, adopting an observer-based perspective toward identity research presents new possibilities for understanding how actors are evaluated, actor–observer dynamics and downstream consequences. We used income identity as a guiding example, but future research could explore any number of consumer identities. Although perceived identity is not necessarily equivalent to an actor's self-expressed identity, our work highlights that observers' perceptions matter; in the case of income identity, who you are may frequently be even more diagnostic of your moral standing than what you do.

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31. When do identity-relevant symbols backfire? An exploration of identity-symbolic fixed and malleable connotations

Tracy Rank-Christman and Geraldine Rosa Henderson

Imagine that a consumer is flipping through a clothing catalog and sees a child wearing a shirt with a monkey on it. Imagine that the consumer is a white female and the child is a white male. The consumer may think this image is cute, since she may often call her own children “little monkeys” as a term of endearment. The shirt, by design, is intended to be relevant to the child’s identity and thus, the product is relevant to the consumer’s identity. Now, imagine instead that both the male child modeling the shirt in the catalog and the female consumer are black (Stack 2018). In this instance, the consumer is a mother who may not think that the image is cute, as the child identity-relevant symbol now communicates additional meaning and labels the black child as a monkey, eliciting collective memories of racial slurs (Baker et al. 2004; Motley et al. 2003). In this example, the consumer’s attention shifts from an identity-relevant advertisement using a child’s identity to an offensive advertisement targeting the consumer’s racial identity. While the catalog image of a child may have been intended by the marketer to highlight a child’s identity, we argue that the monkey on the shirt (that is, the supposed identity-relevant symbol) when paired with a black child’s identity does not highlight the same identity as it does when paired with a white child; rather, when paired with a black child it puts focus on the child’s race, which is identity-relevant given the current marketing context, in turn eliciting cultural meaning or history for some consumers (see also work on social identity contingencies; Steele et al. 2002).

Reed et al. (2012, p.312) “define an identity as any category label to which a consumer self-associates either by choice or endowment.” Each identity within the self-concept contains different profiles and associations, which in turn impact how a person will behave, think or feel (Reed et al. 2012, p.313). Thus, when a symbol is paired with an identity, certain associations that contain unique meanings may be evoked, in turn triggering

different consumer reactions (Reed et al. 2012). In the case of the monkey shirt example mentioned above, white and black identity schemas have a different mental association for what a monkey symbolizes. For some black consumers, the term “monkey” has long been considered a racial slur (Nickalls 2018); whereas for some white consumers, a monkey represents an enduring nickname for children. Thus, when the monkey shirt is paired with a black identity, a negative mental association is provoked, in turn resulting in a negative reaction for some black consumers. Yet, when the monkey is paired with a white identity, a positive mental association is provoked, resulting in a positive reaction for some white consumers. Based on this example, we ask: are all identity-relevant symbols perceived similarly by all consumer identities?

Product, brands, and ideas are often referred to as symbols or semiotics in marketing (Grayson and Shulman 2000; Mick 1986; Mick and Oswald 2007; Oswald 2012). Semiotics refers to “the ensemble of signifying operations at work in a sign system, such as a brand, an advertising text, or a retail setting” (Oswald 2012, p.8). In the example of the H&M clothing store advertisement (i.e., child in a monkey shirt) example illustrated above (Stack 2018), the shirt is the symbol. When worn by the white child, it is associated with a cute and positive association, which may in turn provoke positive emotions for the consumer. The symbol meaning in this example is not interpreted by the consumer in any other way (Reed et al. 2012). We refer to an identity-relevant symbol that is associated with one meaning as an “identity-symbolic fixed connotation” (term adapted from Barthes 1967; Murphy and Dweck 2016; Richens 1994). However, the shirt, when worn by the black child, does not provoke the cute and positive emotion as it did when paired with the white child. Instead, it provokes a negative emotion, meaning or cultural association when paired with a black child, and thus results in negative consumer reactions. We refer to a symbol (for example, product, brand, or thought, Oswald 2012) that shifts in meaning as a function of different identities as an “identity-symbolic malleable connotation” (Barthes 1967; Murphy and Dweck 2016; Richins 1994). Since some identities will associate symbols with one meaning (that is, an identity-symbolic fixed connotation), consumers will interpret the identity-relevant symbol in one, fixed way. Yet, between the two identity groups, the same symbol can have multiple meanings and thus, the symbol is malleable (that is, identity-symbolic malleable connotation). Since two groups of consumers with different identities may have unique mental associations with the same marketplace symbol, the message derived from the identity–symbol pairing can be interpreted differently.

In this chapter, we explore when identity-relevant symbols may backfire (see Wooten and Rank-Christman’s 2019 call for more research). We

do so by exploring identity-symbolic fixed and malleable connotations, an underdeveloped area of semiotic research, specifically by exploring how marketplace symbols (that is, products, behaviors or ideas; Oswald 2012) can have different meanings, as a function of the identity they are associated with, which in turn can change the perception of the marketing message.

IDENTITY RELEVANCE AND IDENTITY-RELEVANT SYMBOLS

Identity relevance is defined as: “when identity information is deliberately processed, its influence will be greatest on stimuli that possess object relevance, symbolic relevance, goal relevance, action relevance or evaluation relevance to the identity” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 316). This definition suggests that people with similar identities should explore and process marketplace products that are relevant to their identity similarly. The literature around identity-relevant behavior and consumption suggests that, for the most part, consumers consume symbols that are consistent with the self (e.g., Epstein 1980; Oyserman 2009; Reed 2004). For instance, when a consumer’s athletic identity is salient, the consumer may be more likely to buy Gatorade, a sports drink product that is symbolic of an athlete’s identity (Reed and Forehand 2016). Individuals often consume identity-relevant products, as those that are inconsistent to the self can act as a threat (e.g., Rank-Christman et al. 2017). Yet, research shows that, at times, identity-relevant products can also pose a threat. In fact, Berger and Heath (2007) found that even if a product is identity-relevant, if it is linked with an undesirable identity, people discontinue consumption. Other research has found that when satiated from overconsumption of an identity-relevant product, consumers may experience decreased enjoyment from the product (Chugani et al. 2015). In all of these examples, researchers use items that are identity-relevant, which were determined based on their symbolic qualities and the meaning they convey both to the self and to others (Belk 1988; Oswald 2012; Reed et al. 2012; Shrum et al. 2013).

Five processes that have an impact on identity relevance have been identified, one being symbolic relevance, which is defined as products or items that allow consumers “the expression of a belief of the position of an object communicates or reinforces one’s identity in the eyes of others” (Reed et al. 2012, p. 316). Early work explored identity-relevant symbols and how they are used, which showed that after experiencing threat, people can enhance the self through the use of symbols (e.g., Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). For instance, after realizing that the car they have been

driving around is actually polluting the environment, a “green” consumer may be more likely to carry around a reusable coffee mug in order to signal to others that they care about the environment. Consumers use products not only to signal who they are after experiencing a threat; in fact, research shows that consumers may also use identity-relevant symbols to signal that they are different (e.g., Berger and Heath 2007) or to show that they have status (Dubois et al. 2011).

Identity-relevant symbols are vital for self and other communication (e.g., Berger and Ward 2010; Oyserman 2009; Shrum et al. 2013). For instance, consumers might buy toys made from recycled materials for their children, to signal to others or to themselves that they are “green” (e.g., Shrum et al. 2013). Yet, being recognized for one’s identity-relevant behavior is more important to some consumers (Winterich et al. 2013). For instance, when some consumers were informed that they would be recognized after donating to a cause by receiving a “thank you” card, the amount of money donated increased, specifically for those who place a high importance on having their moral behaviors publicly noticed (that is, moral symbolization), as well as those who place a low emphasis on keeping these behaviors private (that is, moral internalization) (Winterich et al. 2013). Thus, consumers who appreciate public verification respond positively when they receive an identity-relevant symbol for their actions.

Consumers become attached to symbols that represent their identity, so much so that they have a hard time letting go of products that contain an identity-relevant memory (for example, a T-shirt received after running in a charity event; Winterich et al. 2017). People also have an easier time identifying identity-relevant symbols (Coleman and Williams 2015): research shows that consumers are more accurate at identifying emotional identity-relevant (versus irrelevant) cues, as people pay more attention to symbols that are identity-consistent or self-verifying (Coleman and Williams 2015). Most of the work regarding identity relevance has explored how consumers use or avoid products to reinforce their identity. However, little work has explored how consumers respond to messages that are intended to be identity-relevant, yet change meaning as a result of the symbol–identity pairing.

While research on identity relevance has explored the notion that consumers prefer identity-consistent products, most of the work has explored consumers’ identities in a silo. Yet, self-concepts are actually malleable (Aaker 1999) and multiple consumer identities may be salient at any given time (Reed and Forehand 2016). In fact, identities may “ebb and flow” from moment to moment (Reed and Forehand 2016). For instance, some consumers, such as African Americans, have two self-schemas rather than one (Brannon et al. 2015). Thus, given that consumers may have various

identities salient at any given time, the meaning derived from a marketplace symbol may shift. Building on the work of Brannon et al. (2015), Reed and Forehand (2016) and Aaker (1999), we explore identity-relevant symbols; specifically, how symbol connotations are malleable between some identities, but fixed within a given identity. Thus, the identity-relevant symbol may convey different meanings to a consumer as a function of the identity–symbol pairing.

IDENTITY-RELEVANT SYMBOLS: FIXED OR MALLEABLE

Many researchers have been interested in semiotics, symbols, or products and the meaning that they hold (e.g., Mick 1986; Richins 1994). Early work suggests that there are several parts to understanding symbols: the sign itself, the object itself and how the symbol is interpreted (Mick 1986; Peirce 1931–1958; Sebeok 1976). For this chapter, we are interested in how symbols are interpreted by consumers, as “possessions are signs that are interpreted by observers in a given context by means of an interpretive code” (Richins 1994, p. 505).

Symbols can hold personal value (Richins 1994), can be self- or other-signaling (Shrum et al. 2013), can be irreplaceable (Grayson and Shulman 2000), and can help to cope with threats (e.g., Lee and Shrum 2012). While the consumption literature has explored how consumers use various symbols, to our knowledge little work has explored how symbols are perceived as a result of the identities with which they are paired. By making the assumption that all symbols are the same for all consumers, both researchers and marketers fail to understand whether identity-relevant symbols are equally valued, irreplaceable, and able to help combat threats for all consumers (see Wooten and Rank-Christman 2019). Further, by assuming all marketplace symbols have the same identity associations, marketers may miss opportunities to connect with consumers over products that have positive identity associations.

In marketing, symbols are often paired with various models, actresses, and athletes in advertisements, commercials, and movie product placement. These identity–symbol pairings may in fact create a unique meaning for the consumer (Barthes 1967; Richins 1994). Symbols can have literal or definition-like meanings (that is, denotations or objective meaning), or meanings that are cultural or psychologically driven (that is, connotations or subjective meaning) (Barthes 1967; Puntoni et al. 2010). For instance, Mick and Politi (1989) show that consumers, at times, may interpret advertisements subjectively or objectively. Brands too can change meaning or be interpreted differ-

ently by the consumer depending on the context in which they are consumed. For example, if a product is consumed publicly or privately, the meaning of the symbol may shift (Richins 1994). Another example can be seen in the work of McCracken (1989), who shows that products can change meaning when associated with a celebrity. While McCracken (1989) has explored how products may be seen more positively as a function of their association with celebrities, little is known about how identities paired with symbols may change consumer perception. We suggest that it is not that product symbols have subjective or objective meaning when paired with different identities, as there is no single truth to a product meaning or association. Rather, we argue that when it comes to a symbolic connotation, product associations and their meaning are fixed within a given identity schema (identity-symbolic fixed connotation). Yet, for various identities, the symbol connotation may, at times, shift (identity-symbolic malleable connotation).

Levy (1959, p. 205) once wrote, “the things people buy are seen to have personal and social meanings in addition to their functions.” Yet, in the identity-relevance literature, properties of symbols are often discussed as if they are fixed entities that only convey a single meaning, when in fact the meaning may be malleable. For instance, a Louboutin handbag could be considered a high-end luxury product for some consumers, yet Berger and Ward (2010) show that the bag does not signal high status for all: in fact, consumers with high cultural capital believe that carrying a product with a large conspicuous label signals a lack of social insider knowledge. Since all consumers may not interpret the marketplace symbol in the same way (that is, they do not share the same identity symbol connotation), explaining the various symbolic connotations to them may result in outrage or frustration. Yet, how consumers respond to malleable symbol connotations merits further exploration.

Reed and Forehand (2016, p. 316) define identity-symbolic relevance as being how “the expression of a belief of the position of an object communicates or reinforces one’s identity in the eyes of others.” From this definition, it appears that objects have the same meaning for all consumer identities. However, we argue that some symbols, when paired with certain identities, may convey a different message than when paired with other identities. The message shifts in meaning because each identity contains different associations for various symbols (Reed et al. 2012). Thus, building on Reed and Forehand (2016), we argue that the meaning or expression conveyed from identity-symbolic relevance is identity-specific.

Researchers have long suggested that consumers may consume symbols based on their meanings (e.g., Solomon 1983; Levy 1959). We argue that since symbols may have different meanings, the highlighted meaning may shift as a function of the identity symbol pairing. For instance, a jean

jacket, when paired with an athlete, could signal a traditional identity (also referred to as a “preppy” identity; see Garbarino 2018). However, when paired with a rebel, the same symbol be used to portray hip or edgy. However, to our knowledge, no one has explored meaning malleability, or how symbols may convey different meanings to consumers as a function of identities with which they are paired. This idea becomes evident when exploring various types of identities that consumers may obtain. To further explore malleable or fixed connotations, we explore some relevant, but distinct, literatures in psychology and marketing.

Researchers have identified various concepts that have both fixed and malleable properties: the self-concept, mindsets, frame-switching, and double consciousness (Aaker 1999; Brannon et al. 2015; Luna et al. 2008; Murphy and Dweck 2016). Self-concepts are malleable, as they contain different categorizations as a result of a person’s environment (Aaker 1999). In the literature, according to implicit theorists, consumers can obtain different mindsets when making judgments of others (e.g., Murphy and Dweck 2016). Consumers can fall into one of two camps: they can believe that people have malleable personalities, in that people can change (often referred to as incremental theorists or growth mindsets), or they may believe that people’s personalities are fixed (often referred to as entity theorists or fixed mindsets) and that others do not change (e.g., Murphy and Dweck 2016). Fixed properties are often thought of as those that are permanent, while malleable properties are those that can change (e.g., Murphy and Dweck 2016). Other information-processing theories, such as frame-switching (Luna et al. 2008), also explore this notion of malleability.

According to work on frame-switching, bilingual consumers have the ability to switch mentally, back and forth between two identities, based on the properties of language used in a given advertisement (Luna et al. 2008; see also Lelchuk et al., Chapter 18 in this volume). In this example, the ad holds different meanings for bilingual consumers as a result of whether it is in English or Spanish. Thus, the ad would be considered to have a malleable meaning as a function of the identity it is paired with. More recent work has explored how some consumers, for instance African Americans, have two unique self-schemas, which may be elicited in the marketplace, which has been coined as “double consciousness” (Brannon et al. 2015; Du Bois 1903). The authors note that African Americans have an independent and an interdependent self-schema (Brannon et al. 2015). An independent schema consists of American “norms,” while the interdependent schema focuses on “African American cultural ideas and practices” (Brannon et al. 2015, p. 588). Consumers with a double consciousness respond to marketplace symbols differently as a result of the primed identity (Brannon et al. 2015).

In the literature, evidence of a symbol having a malleable or fixed connotation can also be seen in work by Olson et al. (2016; see also Olson et al., Chapter 30 in this volume), where the authors show that when “green” or organic products are consumed by someone on welfare, the person is seen as less moral. Interestingly, the authors find that when the same products are consumed by someone wealthy, they are seen as more moral in comparison. Thus, the consumer’s identity (that is, being poor or rich) has a great impact on the message sent to other consumers. In support of our notion, we argue that while the judgment of the consuming individual (that is, the rich or the poor consumer) has shifted in the eyes of the other (that is, less moral or moral), the product symbol, whether paired or associated with a wealthy or an underprivileged individual, may also change in meaning (for example, healthy to wasteful).

Work on cross-cultural consumption has also alluded to the notion that identity-relevant products may have more malleable, rather than fixed properties (e.g., Aaker et al. 2001). For instance, Aaker et al. (2001) suggest that brands may have different personality dimensions as a function of the country they are being consumed in. Together, past research provides some evidence that symbols, when paired with certain identities, may be malleable in meaning. To further build a case around identity-relevant symbols being malleable between various identities, we explore anecdotal examples that use various identity-relevant symbols: beer (adult identity), luxury trinkets (luxury identity), and cereal (child identity). Building on our theory, we not only review several anecdotal examples, but we offer potential solutions that may help prevent marketers from using negative identity symbol pairings. Yet, we do so with caution, as this work is purely conceptual. Thus, we also encourage further research to explore the impact of these conceptual notions empirically.

Marketplace Examples

Heineken Beer

In 2017, Heineken created an advertisement for its beer (Nudd 2018). The ad is set on a rooftop on what appears to be a hot summer day. In the ad, a bartender sees a consumer at the end of the bar who looks as though they can use a drink. The bartender opens a cold Heineken bottle and slides it down to the end of the bar. As the Heineken slides down the bar, it passes many African American consumers until it reaches the end of the bar and lands next to a glass of white wine, in front of a Caucasian consumer. The Caucasian consumer picks up the bottle and takes a drink. Across the screen in bold white letters reads, “Sometimes lighter is better . . . 99 calories.”

While the copy was hinting at “lighter” in terms of calorie count, since the symbol (that is, the beer), in this case, passed up many African Americans until paired with a Caucasian, the symbol conveyed a malleable, negative symbolic connotation for African American viewers. Had Heineken left out the ad copy “Lighter is better,” or did not have the drink end up in the hands of a Caucasian consumer, the symbol would have conveyed a fixed, positive meaning. Yet, instead, the malleability of the symbolic connotation made the ad discriminatory.

Avoiding the mess Marketers may have been able to better understand how their message was interpreted by various consumer identities prior to launch had they changed their employees’ perspective. In the specific case of Heineken, employees could have “walked in the African American consumers’ shoes” prior to launching the ad. Work on perspective-taking suggests that people are less discriminatory towards others when they take the viewpoint of that person, compared to a control group and a thought suppression group (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000). For instance, Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) explored how perspective-taking and thought suppression of the elderly impacted written thoughts about the elderly. They found that when people suppressed thoughts about the elderly or took the elderly’s perspective, they wrote fewer biased thoughts about the group (compared to the control condition). Further, Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) found that the perspective-taking group, differently from both the control group and the thought suppression group, wrote more positive thoughts about the elderly. The authors explain that when people take the perspective of others, they actually “put the self in the other” (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000, p. 716), which in turn not only decreased discriminatory thoughts, but also increased positive ones. Therefore, marketers, when using diverse populations in their ads, should aim to have marketing teams take the “diverse others” perspective in order to understand all perceptions of their materials. It has recently been suggested that virtual reality results in perspective-taking (e.g., Herrera et al. 2018). Virtual reality may help marketers to change their perspective and, in turn, decrease the likelihood of using offensive identity-symbolic connotations.

Prada

In 2018, Prada released Pradamalia, a line of tiny luxury trinkets (Ly 2018). While the line consisted of several “imaginary creatures” (stated by Prada 2018; Ly 2018), the company received a backlash after two of the figures released strongly resembled blackface imagery. Blackface imagery was used to depict African American stereotypes (e.g., Baker et al. 2004). Prada (2018) pulled the figures from its stores and released a statement indicating

that the figures were “not intended to” recreate blackface imagery (Ly 2018).

Avoiding the mess It is vital for marketers to understand the relationship between a consumer’s identity and identity-relevant symbols. To do so, marketers may consider the use of associative networks, which are discussed in many consumer behavior textbooks (e.g., Babin and Harris 2016). Identities contain unique concepts and mental associations (Reed et al. 2012). Thus, prior to launching, marketers may consider piloting their materials using a diverse focus group. All participants in the focus group would be instructed to develop associative networks, based on the various identities, products and symbols included in the marketing materials. By having a group of diverse participants develop associative networks, marketers can better understand the various associations, meanings and responses behind their materials.

Kellogg Corn Pops

In 2017, Kellogg’s created new artwork, “The Pop Shoppe,” for its Corn Pops cereal box (McGirt 2017). The image contained illustrations of Corn Pops engaging in different activities (for example, pushing a shopping cart, playing in a water fountain, juggling, and so on). There was one Corn Pop that played the role of the janitor; he was sweeping the Shoppe. The color of the Corn Pop was brown, not yellow like all the others, suggesting that he was of African American or Latino descent. While aiming to make the Corn Pops art diverse, the artist decided to paint the janitor role of the Corn Pop brown, which in turn provoked a negative reaction for some consumers.

Avoiding the mess Based on past literature, marketers may be able to use priming to ensure their message is received in the way it was intended (e.g., Reed 2004). If marketers know that certain identity-relevant symbols are positively associated in a given identity, they could prime that specific identity to ensure positive mental associations are activated. For instance, with the Corn Pops example, priming an American identity may have decreased the negativity associated with the janitor Corn Pop that was given the color brown (e.g., Brannon et al. 2015).

CONCLUSIONS, MARKETPLACE IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Wooten and Rank-Christman (2019) recently called for researchers to better understand when anti-stigmatization cues may backfire in the marketplace.

Yet, we put forth to researchers an even bigger pursuit: that is, to understand when identity-relevant cues, anti-stigmatized or not, backfire.

In this chapter, we explore how identity-relevant symbols can backfire. We specifically explore how the malleability of identity-relevant symbols may be linked to negative mental associations when paired with certain identities. While some identity-product pairings could result in positive messages for companies, in this chapter we explore the negative effects, as they could be detrimental to a company's image. Yet, future research should aim to understand both positive and negative associations. When developing marketing materials, marketers should be aware that some symbolic connotations are malleable, not fixed.

Since marketing messages could have a large impact on the way a consumer perceives the marketer or the organization (e.g., Porath et al. 2010) it is vital to realize that identity-relevant symbols may have malleable connotations. When consumers do not feel correctly identified by the marketer, they may feel threatened and thus avoid the product, company, or brand (Henderson and Rank-Christman 2016; Rank-Christman et al. 2017). To ensure that marketers are using identity-relevant, rather than irrelevant messages, we provide marketers with some suggestions that may help to avoid such mishaps. As noted in many of the anecdotal examples, many companies received backlash from using identity-symbols that have malleable connotations. Yet, it still remains unknown which emotions result when an identity-relevant symbol is paired with an identity that elicits negative mental associations. Thus, additional empirical research is encouraged to better understand consumer response to such mishaps, which in turn should help marketers to remedy them.

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