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Social Identity in Marketing Research: An Integrative Framework

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Abstract

This article presents an integrative framework that conceptualizes how consumers come to socially identify with specific groups, products, and brands, and *how and when these social identifications influence reactions to marketing stimuli*. Drawing upon self-concept, functional attitude theory, social cognition and social identity research, a framework is developed that provides insights for product positioning, brand loyalty, spokesperson research and target marketing. The framework critically analyzes prior research on the role of social identity within marketing and highlights a number of substantive domains that would benefit from future research on social identity.

INTRODUCTION

Throughout the life course, consumers become aware of an infinite number of social categories in the external environment. Some of these potential bases for self-definition are relatively stable (e.g., mother, daughter, friend, African-American, etc.) while others may be more transitory (e.g., Republican, athlete, graduate student etc.). These social categories include any social constructions that arise from culture, society, peer groups and even marketers. Although a consumer can potentially self-identify with every possible social category, not all social categories receive significant attention from the consumer (Kihlstrom 1992). The consumer is likely to only attend to those social categories that are especially self-relevant and it *is these self-relevant social categories that constitute a consumer's social identity.*

A fundamental premise that bridges marketing and psychology is that consumers are often attracted to products and brands that are linked to their social identity (Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002; Stayman and Deshpande 1989). This linkage may come about because the brand or product symbolizes the consumer's own personality traits (Aaker 1997), or embodies being the "type" of person that the consumer aspires to become (Belk, Bahn and Mayer 1982; cf. Levy 1959). In these situations, the consumer's social identity motivates her to form, hold, and express social identity-oriented beliefs (Shavitt 1990; Katz 1960; Smith, Bruner and White 1956).

The power of these symbolic, social identity-based preferences is often reflected in marketing practice and in academic research. In an attempt to leverage the power of affiliation, marketers often position brands and products to reflect a particular social identity-oriented lifestyle and thereby prompt more favorable judgments from consumers who possess that social identity (Reed 2002). To position brands around a social identity, persuasive communications

often adopt a perspective shared by members of the social identity, utilize actors or endorsers who possess the social identity, or develop other techniques that can create a psychological connection between a social identity and the brand. Academic research has suggested that such social identity-based positioning techniques are indeed influential. For example, social identity has been found to influence a wide variety of consumer behaviors and attitudes including spokesperson response (Deshpandé and Stayman 1994), advertising response (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Grier and Deshpandé 2001; Jaffe and Berger 1988; Jaffe 1991; Meyers-Levy 1988), food consumption (Hirschman 1981; O' Guinn and Meyer 1984; Stayman and Deshpandé 1989; Wallendorf and Reilly, 1983; Wooten 1995), media usage (Saegert, Hoover and Hilger 1985), brand loyalty / organizational patronage (Deshpandé, Hoyer and Donthu 1986), and information processing tendencies (Meyers-Levy and Sternthal 1991). This body of research suggests that social identification can lead consumers to link products to particular social identities and even to form particular impressions of consumers who use particular kinds of products (Kleine, et. al 1993; Shavitt, et. al 1992; Shavitt and Nelson 2000, see also Baran, Mok, Land and Kang 1989).

Although research in marketing has documented many situations in which social identity influences evaluation, our understanding of exactly when and how social identity is likely to become an active influence on the development of consumer attitudes and behavior is still in its infancy. To address this issue, we present a framework that argues that social identities influence consumer behavior when the social identity in question is accessible to the consumer and when the social identity serves as a diagnostic cue in an evaluation. Although the concepts of accessibility and diagnosticity have been used in other domains (Feldman and Lynch 1988), the current framework expands beyond these basic ideas and delineates the numerous factors and

unique influences that produce them. The framework argues that the influence of consumer social identity on response to marketing stimuli is shaped by not just by accessibility or by diagnosticity, but rather the interaction of the two. Moreover, by advancing an inclusive definition of social identity, the framework effectively connects otherwise disparate streams of research. For example, our understanding of racial processing is as applicable to social identities based on roles, marketing clubs, sub-cultures, etc., as it is to racial distinctions themselves. As such, one key contribution of the framework is to unify the many streams of research on social identity into one cohesive framework. Based on these insights, specific avenues of research that would increase our understanding of the role of social identity in marketing are proposed.

In summary, the express goals of this article are 1) to provide a unified framework that conceptualizes when and how social identity-based processing occurs, 2) to connect our current understanding of social identity to other streams of research within marketing and 3) to articulate a number of specific research domains that require further study. In particular, we aim to identify specific domains that demonstrate the interactive power of the framework. To achieve these goals, this article is organized into three sections. First, we briefly solidify our current definition of social identity by discussing the evolution of the construct in the context of functional attitude theory and social cognition research. Second, we present a two-stage framework of when and how social identity influences reactions to marketing stimuli. We discuss the marketing implications of key moderating factors that influence each stage of this framework. Finally, based on the conceptual analysis above, we generate several key research questions and specific issues intended to further elucidate our understanding of the role of social identity in marketing and consumer research.

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL IDENTITY IN MARKETING: AN INTEGRATIVE FRAMEWORK

Theoretical Underpinnings of the Framework

The fundamental premise underlying the current framework is that although a consumer's sense of self can be developed from a wide range of possible *social identities* (SI), only a subset of them will influence the consumer in any given situation (Markus and Nurius 1987; Markus and Kunda 1986; McGuire, McGuire and Winton 1979). As a result, it is essential that marketers understand the factors that increase the accessibility of various SIs and that increase the diagnostic value of those SIs to various judgments. Accessibility and diagnosticity become even more important when one considers the full range of SIs that could potentially influence consumer behavior. A brief sampling of possible SIs includes objective membership groups (e.g., gender), culturally determined membership groups (e.g. ethnicity and religion), abstracted role ideals (e.g. mother), groups premised on association with a known individual (e.g., a graduate advisor), or even with an unknown individual (e.g., Tiger Woods) (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi and Ethier 1995). To provide a more comprehensive sense of the types of SIs that are relevant to marketers, figure A-1 provides a typology complete with explicit examples.

Insert Figure A-1 about here

The theoretical underpinnings of the current framework are found in a wide range of disciplines including personality theory (Rosenberg and Gara 1985), self-concept and identity (Erikson 1964; Sirgy 1982), symbolic interactionism (Goffman 1959; Mead 1934), impression management (Schlenker 1980), social cognition (Kilhstrom and Cantor 1986), and social identity/social categorization theory (Tajfel 1959; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oaks, Reicher and Wetherell 1987). These research streams have found that social identity often serves a *social adjustment function* in which holding certain beliefs allows the opinion holder to

reinforce connectedness with those who hold similar SIs and disassociate from those who do not (Smith et. al 1956, page 42).

In the intervening years, the social adjustment function evolved into the *social identity function* and now argues that attitudes can embody a unique social classification or *reference group* (Nelson, Shavitt, Schennum and Barkmeier 1997; Shavitt 1990, 1989; Shavitt and Nelson 2000). For example, a strong association of the self with “American” encourages individuals to hold a whole host of attitudes regarding American concepts such as the U.S. flag or other patriotic symbols and beliefs. Over time, these attitudes not only result from shared group beliefs, but actually come to embody group membership itself. A consumer who possesses an “American” SI can use *evaluative content* associated with what they believe it means to be “American” to facilitate product choices that will further support and reinforce the SI (e.g. purchasing a domestic automobile or avoiding French brie). This process is likely to result in a collectively anchored preference or attitude that is formed via identification processes (Kelman 1958) and is held, expressed or used as a guide for behavior in order to establish, maintain or even communicate that SI to others (cf. Shavitt 1990).

Building from this motivational conception of SI, the present framework describes the processes by which a consumer’s SI becomes activated in memory and by which this activated concept then influences attitude, judgment formation and purchase behavior. Although a wide variety of factors influence these processes, each factor influences one of the framework’s two primary stages: accessibility or diagnosticity. It is important to note that although the framework contains two primary stages, these stages are not intended to indicate an ordered sequence of psychological processes. Rather, these stages may occur simultaneously and often occur without any conscious awareness. A full diagram of this framework is provided in figure A- 2.

Insert Figure A- 2 about here

Stage 1: Accessing Social Identity

Given that SI has been defined as a self-relevant social category, it is logical to question exactly what constitutes self-relevancy and what factors prompt self-relevant information processing. This is effectively a distinction between availability and accessibility—all SIs may be *available* to a consumer, but only those SIs that are personally important to the consumer are likely to be *accessible*. As such, availability merely indicates that the SI could be activated from memory while *accessibility indicates that the SI is presently an “activated” conceptual structure in the consumer’s working self-concept* (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand, Deshpandé and Reed 2002). In turn, the activation of a particular SI often prompts individuals to categorize themselves along SI-oriented criteria (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002; Turner and Oakes 1986). Although consumers can consciously assess their relative similarity or dissimilarity with other individuals, a great deal of this self-categorization occurs without conscious processing (Eiser and Sabine 2001; cf. Stapel and Koomen 2000).

To the extent that consumer SI is accessible, fundamental marketing practices such as segmentation and targeting are more likely to be effective. For example, a number of researchers have examined how various target markets (e.g., older consumers, women, Blacks) arrive at the higher levels of affinity for the brands targeted to similar SI groups. In this research, racial similarity (Whittler 1989), role congruence (Meyers-Levy 1989) labeling (Tepper 1994), intensity of ethnic identification (Williams and Qualls, 1989), shared cultural knowledge (Brumbaugh 1997), and ethnic salience (Deshpande and Stayman 1994) all evoke positive effects and reactions among the respective target markets. In general, these targeting strategies

work by influencing consumers' perceptions of similarity between characteristics of the ad (e.g., source pictured, language used, lifestyle represented) and characteristics of themselves (e.g., reality or desire of having the represented lifestyle) (Whittler 1989; Whittler and DiMeo, 1991). For example, Terry and Hogg (1996) found that perceived norms linked to a behaviorally relevant reference group ("regular exercisers") influenced intentions to engage in exercise, but only for subjects who identified with the group (Cota and Dion, 1986; Gerard and Hoyt, 1974; Terry and Hogg, 1996; see also Madrigal, 2001; Ybarra and Trafimow, 1998).

In the present framework, we argue that there are three classes of factors marketers can explicitly consider that may increase the accessibility of available SIs: social situations that draw consumer attention to specific SI, contextual factors in the environment that prompt a consumer to process his or her SI, and pre-existing associations between the consumer's self-concept and a particular SI. We now turn to each of these factors.

The Consumption Situation. The situation in which the consumer resides can increase the accessibility of a particular SI to the extent that it is unusual or "distinctive" (McGuire, McGuire, Child and Fujioka 1978; McGuire, McGuire and Winton 1979). In general, research on distinctiveness has found that individuals are more likely to spontaneously mention dimensions of a SI to the extent that the SI reflects the consumer being in the minority in the immediate social situation. The assumption is that when a consumer spontaneously mentions a SI in open-ended self-descriptions, that SI is said to be at least momentarily top of mind, or highly activated. In turn, this activation can subsequently influence consumer responses to a wide variety of marketing stimuli related to the SI including spokespeople (Stayman and Deshpandé 1994) advertising (Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand, Deshpandé and Reed 2002; Grier and Deshpandé 2001) and products (Wooten 1995).

To illustrate the power of the consumption setting on SI based judgment and decision making, imagine a male African American consumer in a grocery store full of either male Caucasian consumers or of female African American consumers. Due to differential distinctiveness, it is likely that this consumer would have greater access to his ethnic SI in the first situation and to his gender SI in the second (McGuire, McGuire and Winton 1979). When accessible in this fashion, these SIs might trigger attitudes and or judgments useful for consumer decision-making. For example, if standing in front of the grocery store magazine rack, the African American consumer might be more likely to peruse Ebony Magazine in the first case and GQ in the second. In these cases, the consumer perceives a stronger link between the SI (e.g., ethnic vs. gender) and the brand (Ebony vs. GQ). The accessibility of a SI is thus a key conceptual variable to consider when designing or evaluating SI oriented marketing strategies because it establishes a possible link between the SI and brand attitudes that may be generated on the basis of the SI.

Contextual Identity Cues. A second factor that can influence the accessibility of a SI is the presence of contextual cues in the environment that trigger social identity-based processing. Potential environmental cues that could have this influence include reference group symbols (Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman and Sloan 1976; Smith and Mackie 1995), symbols related to out-groups (Wilder and Shapiro, 1984), out-group members (Marques, Yzerbyt and Rijsman 1988), and visual images and words (Aquino and Reed II 2002; Brumbaugh 2002; Chatman and von Hippel 2001; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand, Deshpandé, and Reed II 2002; Hong, Morris, Chiu and Martínez 2000;). Exposure to these environmental cues can activate SI related concepts in memory and thereby increase the likelihood that consumers will use their SI in the evaluation of marketing stimuli (cf. Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand,

Deshpandé, and Reed II 2002; Hong et al. 2000; Wyer and Srull 1986). For example, Mitchell, Banaji and Nosek (1998) found that people's attitude toward Michael Jordan was positive (negative) when the category of athlete (African American) had been made salient. Similarly, LeBoeuf and colleagues found that the car and food preferences of Chinese-Americans were more stereotypically American when an American as opposed to Chinese SI was made salient through the content and language of self-elicitation tasks (LeBouef and Shafir, 2003; study two). These findings suggest that primes can differentially activate specific social categories and thereby alter which SI a consumer brings to bear in an evaluation.

Non-social identity cues produce these differential responses to social identity-relevant stimuli by highlighting the similarity between the consumer and stimulus. For example, Forehand et al. (2002) exposed consumers to print advertising that contained embedded identity primes such as photos of the Great Wall of China. Consumers exposed to these identity primes were more likely to spontaneously mention their ethnic SI in a subsequent self-description task and this SI activation influenced the consumer's evaluation of ethnically-targeted advertising that immediately followed the ads which contained the identity prime. The primes stimulated the processing of advertising content related to a specific SI and thereby increased the perception of similarity (or dissimilarity) between a consumer and the content. When viewed as a member of the "in-group", the spokesperson was then considered more interesting (Linville, Fischer and Salovey 1989), more persuasive (Berscheid 1966), more likable (Neimeyer and Mitchell 1988), and more similar to the consumer (Chatman and von Hippel 2001; Taylor et al. 1978).

Strength of Association between the Self and a Social Identity. It has been argued that the self is comprised of multiple identities (Deaux, et. al 1996) that are hierarchically ordered (Stryker 1980). The self-importance of a given SI is determined by a multitude of factors

including an individual's prior interactions with other members of the SI, the previous use of the SI in judgments and attitude formation, and the general salience of the SI in the consumer's social environment. By implication, this ordering implies that the more importance a given SI holds within the person's overall sense of who they are, the more likely that person's attitudes, cognitions, and behaviors are to be consistent with the attributes, traits, or standards associated with the SI.

An additional factor that influences the accessibility of a SI is the extent to which it is strongly associated with, or central to, the consumer's self-concept (Charters and Newcomb 1952; McGuire et. al 1979). Since consumers attend, react and interpret self-related information easily (Frable 1989; Kuiper and Rogers 1979; Markus 1977; Markus and Sentis 1982; Symons and Johnson 1997), SIs that possess high self-importance are easily activated and become highly accessible over time. For example, consumers with a strongly held gender SI are more likely to have "male" or "female" as part of their self-schemata and typically have greater access to gender in their self-concept (Bem 1981; see also Schmitt, Leclerc and Dube-rioux 1988).

This chronic association of a SI with the self has generally been referred to as "strength of identification" and influences consumer attention to SI-related stimuli, purchase intentions for SI-related products, and reactions to SI-congruent actors in advertising (Deshpandé, Hoyer and Donthu 1986; Ellis et al. 1985; Hirschman 1981; Saenz and Aguirre 1991; Williams and Qualls 1989). For example, consumers who strongly identify with a group are more likely to behave in a fashion consistent with that group's norms than are weak identifiers (Cota and Dion 1986; Gerard and Hoyt 1974; Madrigal 2001; Terry and Hogg 1996; Ybarra and Trafimow 1998). The influence of strength of identification is also nearly universal as its effects have been demonstrated across a variety of SIs including African American identity (Williams and Qualls

1989), Asian American identity (Ellis, McCullough, Wallendorf and Tan 1985), Hispanic identity (Deshpandé, Hoyer and Donthu 1986; Saenz and Aguirre 1991), Jewish identity (Hirschman, 1981), as well as familial identity (Baldwin and Holmes 1987) and even moral identity (Aquino and Reed II, 2002). Prior correlational research has investigated antecedents of a SI's self-importance. For example, Kleine, Kleine and Kernan (1993) found correlational evidence that a SI will be more self-important when more opportunities exist to enact and receive feedback about the SI in the form of social connections (Kleine, et. al 1993) and through processes of reflected and self-appraisals which lead to self-enhancing esteem (Laverie, Kle ine and Kleine 2002).

To illustrate the influence of strength of identification on accessibility, consider the example of two consumers who each consider themselves to be “athletes.” The first consumer participated in athletics in his youth and is now a weekend warrior. The second participated in athletics in his youth and has continued do so into his adulthood on a professional basis. Given their backgrounds, one would expect that both consumers associate the concept of “athlete” with their self-concept. However, this association is likely to be much stronger for the second consumer due to his professional involvement in athletics. As a result, although an “athletic” SI is *available* for both consumers, it is likely to be much more consistently *accessible* for the second individual.

Stage 2: Determining the Diagnosticity of a Social Identity in Evaluation

Although SI accessibility is a necessary precondition to social identity-based evaluation of marketing stimuli, it is clearly not sufficient. To influence the evaluation of marketing stimuli, the SI must also be *diagnostic* to the evaluation. Social identity diagnosticity is dependent on two interrelated factors: how relevant the SI is to the domain of evaluation (e.g. an “athlete” SI would

be relevant to evaluating athletic shoes, but is unlikely to be relevant to evaluating kitchen appliances) and the degree to which SI-based processing allows a consumer to discriminate between options (e.g. an “athlete” social identity might help discriminate between a pair of Nike shoes and a pair of Keds, but may not help discriminate between a pair of Nike shoes and a pair of Adidas shoes).

In general, relevancy is based on the degree to which the SI is congruent with the domain of interest. For example, an attitude object such as a brand may possess symbolic aspects that make it congruent with a particular SI (cf. Sirgy 1982). When the consumer perceives correspondence or congruency between the brand and a SI, evaluative content linked to the SI is more easily transferred to the evaluation of the brand. This notion of correspondence between an object and a SI is implicit in functional approaches to attitudes that argue that certain objects are linked to particular SIs (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan 1993; Laverie, Kleine and Kleine 2002; Shavitt, 1989; cf. Solomon, 1983). Within marketing, object-identity correspondence is produced by three factors: symbolic relevance, goal relevance, and action relevance. Each of these forms of relevance and the general notion of discrimination are now discussed in turn.

Diagnosticity Based on Symbolic Relevance. Symbolic relevance exists when the expression of a belief or the possession of an object communicates one’s SI or reinforces an important element of that SI (Shavitt and Nelson 2000). As an example, an attitude toward some issue (e.g., foreign policy) may be relevant to a consumer's political SI if the consumer perceives that a particular stance on the issue reflects certain ideals or values endemic to the political SI (Duck, Hogg and Terry 1999; Rokeach, 1973). In a marketing context, observers readily make person impression judgments based on knowledge of the purchase decisions of targets (Baran, Mok, Land and Kang 1989). Hence, objects such as products can provide a “social stock of

knowledge that people use in typifying those they meet” (Shavitt and Nelson 2000, page 52). Such objects are symbolic (Solomon, 1983) in the sense that they tend to be displayed publicly and are widely seen as reflecting public affiliation with a particular SI (e.g. membership in a particular group (Shavitt 1989). Therefore, SIs can be conceived as uniting around forms of expressive symbolism (e.g., Yuppies, motorcycle gangs, or sports teams). The self-definitions of group members are derived from symbolic relevance associated with the common symbol system to which the group is dedicated (cf. Solomon 1983). Moreover, this general concept of symbolic congruence has been used to explain consumer attraction to brands (Birdwell, 1968; Dolich 1969; Eriksen and Sirgy 1989; Grubb and Stern 1971; Malhotra 1988) and retail environments (Sirgy, Grewal and Mangleburg 2000). In general, it has been argued that consumer attraction to these entities occurs to the extent that there is a cognitive match between value-expressive attributes of a marketing stimulus and a consumer’s self-concept.

One of the most natural applications of symbolic relevance to marketing practice is the cultivation and maintenance of identity driven brand loyalty (Oliver, 1999). Brand loyalty is a critical element of many firm’s strategy and it has been argued that its contributions even surpass those created by consumer satisfaction (Oliver 1999). Supporting this contention, the net present value increase in profit that results from a 5% customer retention increase ranges between 25% and 95% (Reichheld and Sasser 1990). To foster this all-important loyalty, marketers can create meaningful connections between their products and the consumer’s SI. To the extent that this is successful, the brand comes to symbolize a set of impressions that are linked to the consumer, to desired user imagery, and even to the brand’s personality. As a result, ownership of certain products can become badges for one’s SI (Oliver, 1999) or can even be incorporated into the

consumer's sense of self (Belk 1988; Kleine, Kleine and Allen 1995). In extreme cases, the consumer cannot conceive of him or herself as whole without the brand (Oliver 1999).

Some examples of the intertwining of identity and branding include sports teams, music groups and famous spokespeople. Consumers develop relationships with these entities both to shape their expressed SI and also to bolster the esteem via the "reflective glory" that their chosen groups can provide (Cialdini, et. al). To signal these relationships to others, consumers can become fanatically loyal and will latch on to many symbols of membership including extensive travel (Dead heads), special uniforms (Trekkies), or logos, badges, and bumper stickers (Oliver, 1999). Another more recent example of this is the documented identity driven brand loyalty of NASCAR enthusiasts (Darden 2000). Focus groups have been conducted which have demonstrated that identification with NASCAR can foster the almost "blind loyalty" for those brands who sponsor NASCAR drivers and teams.

To develop such symbolic-based loyalty, firms should create corporate programs, local clubs, and events that allow the consumer to express affiliation with the brand. For example, Harley-Davidson encourages symbolic relevance among its buyers by promoting local H.O.G. (Harley Owners Group) chapters that require members in the corporate H.O.G. organization. Presumably, this membership is a feedback mechanism that is likely to enhance the self-importance of consumers who possess such a SI. The success of these kinds of programs suggests the importance of pursuing identity driven brand loyalty strategies whose key premise is to attempt to link the brand, product or logo to a particular SI that a profitable group of consumers will care about.

Diagnosticity Based on Goal Relevance. Goal relevance exists when a potential belief or behavior is related to an issue or outcome that is important to the consumer's accessible SI.

These beliefs or behaviors could include the expression of an attitude, specific group-related behaviors, or simply affiliation with a product or brand. For example, if members of two different ethnic groups debate the merits of affirmative action, the individuals of the group who are likely to benefit from affirmative action are likely to perceive more goal relevance in their attitude expression. For these individuals, the expression of a pro-affirmative action attitude serves to further the interests of their group and is therefore goal relevant (Kravitz 1995).

Although individuals who oppose affirmative action might also believe that affirmative action could affect their group (e.g. affirmative action “steals” opportunities from their group), this belief is less directly related to their group’s overall achievement (or lack thereof). However, the perception of relevance could still be momentarily heightened if an individual was concerned about his or her upcoming opportunities on the job market.

Goal relevance is often evaluated relative to social norms that imply, or even dictate, desired goals (Kelman 1958 1961; Pruitt and Rubin 1986; Thibaut and Kelley 1959;). The clarity of these proscriptions is determined by the extent to which they are anchored in a group of real or imagined others with similar beliefs, opinions and attitudes (Festinger 1954). Moreover, the goal-based content that is linked to a SI provides individuals who possess that SI with evidence about their social reality (R.M. Turner and Killian 1972) and may provide them with clear evaluative responses to or judgments of identity relevant stimuli. As a result, the implicit and explicit communication of these norms is an important consideration in constructing SI oriented persuasive communications. A very interesting example of the use of goal relevance to link a SI to a particular “product” is the Army of One® campaign. Research had suggested that the brand identity of the army was non-distinct from other branches of the military (<http://goarmy.com/>). For example, when consumers thought about what it meant to be a part of the Air-force or the

Marines, a pretty clear identity image came to mind. Although the second most recalled advertising slogan ever was the “be all you can be campaign” (<http://goarmy.com/>), the army was in need of repositioning in that its brand image was not only amorphous but “out of touch”. Therefore, it attempted to develop a stronger brand image by linking a key set of goal values to the overall schema of trying to preserve individual autonomy while communicating the importance of the individual as one link in the chain of the group (<http://goarmy.com/>).

Diagnosticity Based on Action Relevance. Objects may allow a person to perform some action specifically related to a particular SI. For example, a “baseball player” may require a bat, glove and cleats to perform within that identity. Action relevance is determined by the extent to which an object allows an individual to perform behavioral functions associated with a particular SI. For example, identity-related possessions form a coherent cluster around each identity. These possessions or what has been called product constellations (Solomon, 1983) are the objects a consumer perceives to be useful for enacting a SI.¹ Action relevant objects are objects that play a central role in behaviors related to one’s SI. Past research suggests that simply having the possessions or displaying the objects is not enough; what is important is how a person perceives other consumer’s reactions to the *use* of those possessions. The more SI related possessions a consumer has, the more empowered a consumer will feel about his ability to perform in that SI (Kleine, et. al 1993; Laverie et. al 2002) and the more confident the consumer will be that he holds appropriate opinions (Jones and Gerard 1967).

Diagnosticity Based on Discrimination Ability. Even if a SI is accessible, self-important and object relevant, it still might not be the basis by which a consumer forms an attitude. The SI must also allow the consumer to discriminate between various options. For example, suppose a consumer is evaluating several shoe brands that advertisers have tried to connect to the

consumer's social identity (e.g., "Urban Youth"). Although the consumer's urban youth identity may be accessible and deemed relevant to the shoe category, it may not be clear to the consumer which brand best embodies her urban youth identity. In this situation, the absence of a clear identity-related norm provides her with an inadequate basis for choice (Kallgren, Reno and Cialdini 2000) and her SI therefore fails to discriminate between the options available. It is likely that SIs may vary in the degree to which they provide discrimination in any given domain. For example, role-based social identities may be more likely to provide a basis for choice because roles are often associated with expected behaviors or scripts for action (Pryor and Merluzzi, 1985).

IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH ON SOCIAL IDENTITY IN MARKETING

In the popular press, it is often easy to find anecdotal evidence of marketers' attempts to get consumers to like a product offering because it embodies "being" some "type" of person that they are or want to be (Belk, Bahn and Mayer 1982). For example, in life style advertising and certainly in numerous product positioning and market segmentation strategies; practitioners appear to believe that a consumer's social identification with a particular subculture, ethnic identity, family, gender, set of peers or even spokesperson can be the basis for a favorable consumer judgment. Therefore, brands and products are often specifically created or positioned to embody a particular SI oriented lifestyle. However, an effective use of marketing strategy that involves the use of SI (i.e., positioning, targeting, segmentation etc.) must *simultaneously* consider *both* stages of the framework presented in this article. Nearly all of the prior research on SI in marketing falls into one of the compartments of our framework, most of this research has been conducted in isolation from other projects in the stream. Although, the current framework

identifies and integrates many of the factors that prompt consumers to use their SIs as a cue to attitudes and decisions, a host of key future research questions remain. These questions revolve around three interrelated issues: 1) What additional insights can be developed regarding the accessibility and diagnosticity of SIs and what other factors beyond accessibility and diagnosticity might influence consumer reaction to stimuli tied to their SIs, 2) When do SIs potentially conflict with each other; how are these conflicts resolved and what is the role of explicit and implicit processing of SI based marketing stimuli on SI driven judgment and decision making and 3) How does the interactions of accessibility and diagnosticity of SIs create a motivational force toward products and what is the macro-role of culture as a meta-context that determines SI based judgments? To help frame a discussion of these future research questions, we begin by first providing a sample of past research that relates to each stage of the framework (see figure A-3). The provided summary of research in this area is intended to tie this past work together relevant to both stages and in doing so; to help highlight the proposed directions for future research.

Insert Figure A-3 about here

Future Research on the Origins of Accessibility

The Interaction of the Social Situation and Personality Variables on SI Accessibility.

Research on consumer distinctiveness has demonstrated that feelings of distinctiveness are often triggered by one's numeric status in the local environment (Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Forehand et. al 2002) as well as social status vis-à-vis other groups (Grier and Deshpande 2001). Although a great deal of research in both marketing and social psychology has documented the outcomes of social distinctiveness, relatively little attention has been directed to factors that

might influence consumer sensitivity to this situational variable. One potential variable that might influence responsiveness to one's social situation is the individual's tendency "to direct attention inward or outward," a tendency that has been termed "self-consciousness" (Brockner 1979; Buss 1980; Fenigstein, Scheier, and Buss 1975, p. 522; Scheier and Carver 1981; Scheier 1976) To the extent that an individual actively directs attention outward, it is likely that he would be more sensitive to his minority or majority status in the environment.

A similar effect could be produced by self-monitoring, an individual's tendency to be guided by "situational cues to social appropriateness" (Snyder 1974, p. 526). High self-monitors focus on what has been called the pragmatic self, and are thought to be sensitive to what is socially appropriate by actively controlling the images that they project in social interaction. In contrast, low self-monitors allow their principled self to guide behavior by tuning out the social matrix, and relying on their individual attitudes and personal beliefs. Given this differential in processing, high self-monitors might not only be more aware of their minority or majority status, but might also be more likely to use their SI as a cue to their attitudes or behavior. Indeed, such influences of self-monitoring have been observed on various behaviors including communication tendencies (Ickes and Bares 1977), uncertainty reduction, (Berger 1979), and self-disclosure (Tardy and Hoseman 1982).

Within the domain of marketing, personality variables like self-consciousness and self-monitoring may influence SI accessibility and resulting response to advertising and products that target identity groups. For example, an individual that is more sensitive to his or her outward surroundings is more likely to feel targeted by advertising that incorporates elements of his or her identity environment (Forehand and Deshpande 2001; Forehand, et. al 2002). In turn, these perceptions may influence attitudes toward spokespeople and content within the advertising

itself. Indeed, recent research suggests that distinctiveness can be both chronic and spontaneous (Grier and Brumbaugh, in press); future research that elucidates the relationship between evoked identities and the personality variables that will trigger differential reactions to such cues should be a key issue for continued examination.

Interaction of Personality and Contextual Cues on SI Accessibility. Personality variables may also interact with contextual cues in determining SI accessibility. Factors like acculturation and strength of identity clearly influence how interwoven one's SIs are within his or her self-concept. Since consumers find it easier to attend, react and interpret information connected to their self-concept (Frable 1989; Kuiper and Rogers 1979; Markus 1977; Markus and Sentis 1982; Symons and Johnson 1997), personality factors that increase the association of SIs with the self are likely to influence sensitivity to contextual cues in the environment. For example, media tip their hand to their desired audience through many subtle (and not so subtle) cues in their content (e.g. the magazine Ebony will contain many more Afro-centric images than will a more mainstream magazine like Cosmopolitan). These cues should influence all consumers to some degree, but it is likely that consumers with social identity-driven self-concepts will be much more sensitive to these cues. Although this prediction directly follows from the tenets of the current framework, it has heretofore not been tested empirically. Future research should investigate the types of personality traits that influence sensitivity to these contextual cues and also investigate whether certain types of cues are highlighted more by these traits.

Future Research on the Origins of Diagnosticity

Building Symbolic Relevance. Product and brand judgments can form around tangible characteristics of the product that affect 1) its utility or instrumentality or 2) the degree to which it is associated with the consumer's sense of self. Although a great deal of research in marketing

has studied the various factors that influence perceived utility, relatively less research has assessed the processes by which products come to symbolize SIs and consumption groups. Theorizing on the process of building brands has often argued that brands develop a host of associations over time and that these associations include beliefs about the typical user, usage occasion, and other consumer-related information (Keller, 2003). In general, these brand-building strategies suggest that brands should repeatedly pair themselves with visual and verbal images of their desired user to build these associations over time. Although this basic process undoubtedly does influence perceptions of the typical user, more research is needed to study the processes by which bonds between brands and SIs are formed and reinforced.

Understanding the processes by which symbolic links are made to brands should also provide a more complete picture of consumer attitude formation. If marketing research focuses solely on product attributes and the salient beliefs linked to them as the basis for brand positioning and it turns out that the driving force behind the consumer's judgments has more to do with symbolic associations such as SI, then it is difficult if not impossible to understand how to modify the consumer's reactions to the brand and or how to make that brand diagnostic to the SI. The conditions under which marketers can significantly impact the symbolic relevance of their brands to a target market are therefore a key issue for future research.

Building Goal Relevance. A great deal of research suggests that the self-concept is shaped in part, through interaction with groups (Allport 1955; Baumeister 1987; Cooley 1902; Mead 1934; Rosenberg, 1979; Schlenker 1985; Shweder and LeVine 1984; Tajfel 1972 1981). In addition to strengthening the SI components of the self-concept, interaction with groups is also likely to influence the goals individuals pursue and deem important to themselves and others. It is thought that individuals come to learn about what it means to hold group memberships in

various social interactions by the roles that they adopt and the relative impact of their personal experiences as active participants within those groups (see figure A-1). In this article, we have already mentioned that many of the SIs that marketers may leverage will be anchored by a reference group of other consumers. Hence, future research should also focus on how goal relevance is fostered and created within specific reference groups.

One avenue that marketers could potentially use to create goal relevance for their brands is the cultivation of perceived self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is defined as “an individual’s beliefs about his or her capabilities to produce levels of performance that exercise influence over events Gollwitzer (1999) Current theory suggests that self-efficacy exerts its effect on behavior through the formation of behavioral intentions (goal setting) and the translation of these intentions into actual behavior. As a result, individuals with high degrees of self-efficacy are more likely to incorporate the perceived goals of their SI into their consumption decisions. Indeed, the formation of implementation intentions, often defined more broadly as how, when and where a behavior will be initiated, is strongly correlated with consumer behaviors (Sheeran and Orbell 2000, Sheeran and Orbell 1999, Verplanken and Faes 1999). However, relatively little is understood about the processes by which marketers can reinforce self-efficacy or direct consumer behavior toward supportable SI oriented goals.

One potential avenue for marketers is to foster a link between the formation of goal intentions and the initiation of goal-directed actions. Since both self-efficacy and implementation intentions are believed to affect the translation of behavioral intentions into action, marketers may be able to model appropriate actions in advertising or other persuasive communications and thereby provide a guide to identity related-goals. In addition, marketers may be able to increase self-efficacy by providing consumers with mastery experiences that focus consumers on both

real-life success and “virtual” success (e.g. mentally “seeing” a SI oriented behavior being accomplished). This is a domain rich with potential avenues of study.

Building Action Relevance and Creating Discrimination. Action relevance is quite distinct from both symbolic and goal relevance since action relevance is often quite objective in nature. Where symbolic and goal relevance are subjectively determined by the consumer, action relevance is determined simply by whether or not an object or product helps the consumer perform identity related-behaviors. As a result, future research on action relevance should study not what aspects make an object relevant to a SI-related behavior, but rather what factors cause a specific product to seem more relevant than its competition. In essence, this is really a question of discrimination. If an entire category is relevant to a certain identity-associated behavior, how might a marketer reinforce that a particular brand is more directly related to success in that endeavor?

One method of creating this discrimination is through the influence of group-related norms. Norms are cognitive structures that reflect a group’s view of the world, itself and others, and can act as powerful determinants of behavior (Festinger 1954; Kelman 1958). Norms are not always enforced by the formal sanction of rewards and punishments, but are rather followed merely because group members internalize these proscriptions for behavior as *useful and correct*. For example, because it benefits the group and its members, the norm of social reciprocity and social commitment are often definitive aspects of group socialization. Societies often try to teach their members that there are important group goals such as treating others in the same way oneself would like to be treated, or remaining true to social contracts in terms of fulfillment of promises and commitments (Gouldner 1960). While broad based social norms may exist as potential guides to behavior, groups may also construct norms pertinent to specific behaviors via

group-anchored attitudes. Although these goal-based norms are sometimes enforced by the formal sanction of rewards and punishments, norms are often followed merely because consumers who possess a particular SI internalize these proscriptions for behavior as useful and appropriate guides for action (cf. Festinger 1954). In turn, these broad-based attitudinal and behavioral guidelines are linked to identification groups (e.g., the SI “Democrat” might be linked to attitudes toward government sponsored social programs). However, in specific membership groups, group members may also construct guidelines pertinent to specific behaviors via group-anchored attitudes. For example, a group of female business executives may determine that they should stand strong against affirmative action because it undermines their credibility in the work place. In this way, their SI as women in business may become linked to negative evaluative information regarding this particular attitude object. In fact, a quasi-field experiment on women’s attitudes toward affirmative action has demonstrated that heightening the salience of an identity increases the alignment of judgments with group membership norms, particularly when the membership group possesses a clear position on the issue (Cohen and Reed 2001). Therefore, social norms associated with a SI or norms constructed within specific membership groups may also provide the directional basis for responding to an object or object of thought such as a brand or product. As such, research should be directed to the means by which marketers can connect brands to the proscriptions of group norms and thereby help consumers discriminate between competing brands. This process will likely involve intense exploratory research to identify brands that could be linked to particular attitude objects.

Dueling Identities

Given the number of groups to which an individual might belong, his or her total sense of identity is likely to consist of an amalgam of SIs (see figure A-1). In James (1890)

conceptualization of 'the social self,' he argued that a person has as many social selves as he or she has important others whose opinion matters. This complexity creates the potential for conflicting proscriptions from one's various SIs that may come about from competitive situations in which different brands that attempt to link themselves to opposing SIs. For example, a white teenager from the suburbs may generally associate himself with mainstream American culture yet be fanatically devoted to hip-hop music. These different SIs might impose inconsistent demands upon that person (Ashforth and Mael 1989; Kriesberg 1949) or conflict with the individual's personal identity (Cheeks and Briggs 1982; Leary, Wheeler and Jenkins 1986). For example, this teen's clothing preferences may be torn between Abercrombie and Fitch and Phat Farm. Future research on SI should investigate how consumers resolve these conflicts and what effect the resolution process has on resulting brand attitudes and behaviors.

One promising stream of research for studying the effects of conflicting social identities on brand attitudes and behavior is dual attitude theory (Wilson et al 1995; Wilson, Lindsey and Schooler 2000). This research has provided evidence that people can simultaneously hold an explicit attitude that displays flexibility and responsiveness and an implicit attitude that resembles an enduring predisposition (cf. Greenwald and Banaji 1995, 2000). In this way, it is possible for incoming information to be parsed and integrated within a particular SI such that the SI in question is likely to act as a basis for retrieving the judgment if it is subsequently salient (Cohen and Reed II 2001). For example, an individual might respond differently to a message promoting changes to the Medicare system depending on the relative accessibility of the individual's "senior citizen" and "American" SIs (Newman, Duff, Schnopp-Wyatt, Brock and Hoffman 1997; cf. Shih, Pittinsky and Ambady 1999). The potential for framing to influence SI

accessibility and thereby change response to persuasive appeals is a domain that merits further study.

The existence of multiple identities within an individual might also influence the accessibility of the various identities due to a desire for optimal distinctiveness (Brewer 1991, 1993). Optimal distinctiveness theory argues that people are governed by two powerful social motives: the need for distinctiveness/uniqueness and the need for inclusion/sameness. As a result, people try to achieve balance by differentiating themselves from the group while still assimilating themselves in the group. From the perspective of the current framework, this suggests that the accessibility of various identities might be increased by either a pull toward a SI (assimilation) or by a push away from a SI (differentiation). Future research should assess the relative power of these processes and their comparative effects on SI accessibility and consumer judgments and attitudes formed on the basis of SI.

Implicit vs. Explicit Processing of Social Identities

The present framework has argued that the self-concepts of consumers contain numerous SIs and that these identities can be made accessible by a wide variety of variables. The argument for a multi-faceted self-identity organizational system is supported by the long-held belief that the self-concept possesses distinct domains (Gergen 1976a; Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984; Higgins, 1987; James, 1890; Jones and Pittman 1982; Markus and Nurius, 1987; McGuire 1985; Rogers, 1951; Tesser and Campbell 1983). The notion that distinct domains of the self-concept exist has been utilized in numerous theories of belief and behavior development. For example, the multiple selves framework has been applied to concepts as diverse as performance (Ruvolo and Markus, 1992), identity (Dunkel 2000; Dunkel and Anthis, 2001), academic achievement (Leondari, Syngollitou, and Kiosseoglou 1998; Oyserman, Gant, and Ager 1995), delinquency

(Oyserman and Markus, 1990), adolescent development (Yowell 2000), reaction to self-relevant evaluations (Swann and Schroeder 1995) and gender differences in self-concept development (Segal, DeMeis, Wood, and Smith 2001; Wood, Christensen, Hebl, and Rothgerber 1997).

Applied to the current framework, this suggests that the self-concept may also contain multiple selves related to the individual's various social identities.

To the extent that the self-concept does include multiple selves related to the individual's various SIs, it is likely that these SIs will influence consumer behavior both explicitly (with conscious awareness) and implicitly (in an automatic or unconscious fashion) (Bargh, Chaiken, Devine 1989; Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell and Kardes 1986; Govender, and Pratto 1992; Greenwald and Banaji 1995; Hetts, Sakuma, and Pelham 1999). Recent research suggests that many cognitive processes related to the self-concept and its effect on behavior may be unconscious or beyond active control (Bargh, McKenna, and Fitzsimons 2002; Farnham, Greenwald, and Banaji 1999; Greenwald et al. 2002; Greenwald and Farnham, 2000; Hetts, Sakuma, and Pelham, 1999; Spalding and Hardin 1999). For example, when brands are associated with a SI that is included in a consumer's self-concept it is likely that the consumer will unconsciously come to associate the brand with the self-concept itself (Perkins and Forehand 2004). Moreover, since the self-concept is generally regarded positively (Brown 1998; Greenwald and Pratkanis 1984; Taylor and Brown 1994), the association of a brand with the self-concept should produce a more favorable attitude toward the brand. Although this basic positive brand-social identity-self-concept relationship has begun to receive empirical support, more research is needed to assess the reach of this generalization process.

A final implicit process that may influence the role of SI in marketing is identity reinforcement. In general, most research on SI has attempted to identify situations in which one's

social identities influence their behavior toward or judgments of consumer products and brands. However, little research has assessed the possibility that a consumer's brand choices and consumption may in turn reinforce the very SIs that drove the choice. The use of one's SI as an informational cue in attitude expression may reinforce the accessibility of that identity and thereby increases the likelihood that the identity will be used in subsequent judgments.

Social Identity Approach and Avoidance

Most prior research on SI has focused on situations in which a consumer is drawn to a particular SI or embraces certain brands due to their association with a SI. Although these positive effects are an instrumental building block in marketing strategy, they only constitute half of the equation. In any situation where a SI is made accessible to consumers, the SI may prompt either approach (positive reaction) or avoidance (negative reaction). When viewing communications utilizing a specific SI, individuals that possess that SI may react with avoidance to the extent that they want to avoid standing out or fear that embracing the SI might hamper a larger goal of assimilation. In addition, individuals who do not possess the SI used in the communication may react with avoidance to the extent that they label the communication as "not for me" (Aaker, Brumbaugh, and Grier 1999; Forehand and Deshpande 2001). Indeed, research on persuasion effects suggest that any variable that leads individuals to make similarity judgments between themselves and an advertisement source (e.g., cultural orientation, Aaker and Williams 1998; social class, Williams and Qualls 1989, ethnicity, Wooten, 1995) should impact the degree to which both target and non-target market effects occur. Although these non-target market reactions are generally accepted, more research is needed to document when they are likely to occur.

One domain that may lead to insights on this approach and avoidance reactions is research on majority and minority influence (Moscovici 1980). This research has found that individuals are influenced in qualitatively different ways depending on the minority or majority source of the influence. Similar to the notion of compliance-based motivation, majority influence initiates a comparison process by which the attention of group members who possess a particular SI is focused on “what others say, so as to fit in with their opinions or judgments” (Moscovici 1980, p. 214). In contrast, minority influence is driven by a validation process in which attention is focused on trying to understand why the minority opinion holders think a certain way about some object or issue. Comparison presumes fairly superficial information processing that is focused on the particular position advocated, while validation facilitates active information processing that focuses on “the more complex matter of how a particular attitudinal position was derived from an external reality” (Eagly and Chaiken 1993, p. 649). Similarly, Nemeth (1985, 1986) and her colleagues argued that minority influence stimulates divergent thinking that leads to creative decisions and judgments because it encourages thought processes that extend beyond the information given. Although other researchers have argued for a single process of majority and minority influence (Latane 1981; Tanford and Penrod 1984), the point here is that the social influence processes that exist within target markets who possess a particular SI may be important determinants of whether or not that segment strongly identifies with the SI and in turn, will be likely to adopt some marketing message in a way that the groups’ judgment toward the product or brand is clear and confidently held.

The Influence of Culture on Social Identity

The types of SIs that consumers are likely to possess clearly vary by culture. For example, the SI of “recreational curler” is highly unlikely to exist among your average Mexican

citizen. Although these baseline differences in the ranges of likely SIs vary by culture, the more interesting question for future research is what effect culture has on the processes that underlie the development and expression of SIs. The concept of culture has been defined as a system of shared meanings that grows out of cultural qualities (e.g., symbols, language, ideas and their attached values, etc.) and this system provides a common lens for perception (Veroff and Goldberger 1995). Culture has also been found to influence the structure and organization of the self-concept (Marsella, Devos and Hsu 1985; Triandis Bontempo, Villareal, Asai and Lucca 1988).

One culturally-based self-concept distinction that produces predictable tendencies in behavior is the division between individualism and collectivism (Triandis 1995). In general, people from collectivist cultures are relatively more responsive to factors that give an indication of others' background and social status, while members of individualistic cultures focus more on individual attitudes, values and beliefs (Gudykunst, Nishida, Kioke and Shiino 1986). Since collectivists tend to be more concerned about the impact of their actions on members of their in-groups, it is likely that they are more sensitive to the SI processes discussed in this present framework. Research has documented that role relationships in collectivist cultures are perceived as more nurturing, respectful, and intimate (Triandis 1989) and tend to produce more sharing (Hui and Triandis 1986). This is perhaps why, among collectivists, a stronger psychological force is required to sever SI ties because the collective relationships are of the greatest importance even when the costs of remaining in those relationships outweigh the benefits (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk and Gelfand 1995).

In contrast, members of relatively individualistic cultures are encouraged to think of themselves in comparatively idiosyncratic terms. Individualists focus on self perceptions that are

autonomous from groups, have personal goals that might or might not overlap with goals associated with the group, and if there is a discrepancy, individualists are more likely to pursue personal goals over group goals (Schwartz 1990). Among persons with individualistic propensities for self-definition, social behavior is best predicted from individual attitudes and other such internal processes (Triandis et. al 1995). Therefore, persons with an individualistic orientation are more likely to drop relationships that do not provide more benefits than costs (Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi and Yoon 1994). Since consumers in individualistic cultures tend to value personal freedom, personal enjoyment and the achievement of individual goals (Kitayama and Markus 1995; Smith and Mackie 1995), it is likely that goal relevance will be a less powerful force in the determination of SI diagnosticity. Given the wide-ranging potential applications of these cultural variables to SI, more research on their interaction is clearly warranted.

CONCLUSIONS

At any given point in time consumers have a subset of SIs that they may adopt in order to guide their thoughts and actions. These SIs can be very important bases for self-definition and in some instances can be the basis by which a consumer forms an attitude, or makes a judgment about a brand. In this regard, a consumer may feel connected with a brand, product or behavior simply because it is “who they are.” Scholars have suggested that when a firm can create meaningful connections between the product and or service and the consumer’s psyche linked to his or her “life-style,” it has important implications because an opinion, a belief, an attitude is correct, valid and proper to the extent that it is anchored in a group of people with similar beliefs, opinions, and attitudes” (Festinger, 1950, page 272).

The notion that a consumer's sense of who they are should relate to their purchase decisions has been an important idea discussed by several scholars (e.g., Levy 1959); whether in terms of an abstract notion of congruency between the self and a brand (Sirgy 1982), in terms of precise roles that the consumer wishes to enact (Solomon 1983) or in terms of particular personality associations embodied within the brand itself (Aaker, et. al. 2001; Aaker 1997). This extremely simple premise is not new. In fact, academic research in marketing has consistently shown that categorizing a consumer in terms of various SIs can lead to differences in how that consumer is likely to behave. However, even though researchers have acknowledged that "identification" may lead a person to willingly adopt an attitudinal position to "maintain a desired relationship and the self-definition that is anchored in the relationship" (Kelman, 1958, page 62), and functional theorists have described social identity motives as reasons why a person might hold a particular attitude, very little research has systematically examined the marketing implications of when and how judgments are impacted by SI processes including identifying when and how they are likely to occur.

Marketing practitioners certainly understand the value of targeting consumers, segmenting markets and positioning products based on the evaluative implications of these SIs. From an applied standpoint, if the brand comes to represent the consumer's social identity, then the consumer would say that the object is "part of me" (cf. Kleine, Kleine and Allen 1995) i.e., an extension of the self (Belk, 1988). Arguably, the goal of successfully executing such a SI oriented marketing strategy can be more effectively met if marketing strategists had a framework that elucidates the key mechanisms of identity-driven processing and its marketing implications. This research attempts to make two contributions to consumer attitude formation and consumer judgment and decision making: 1) to provide a better understanding of the role of SI as a

mechanism leading to consumer judgments and attitudes, and through explication of the research implications implied by the framework 2) to provide a managerial roadmap of the interplay of strategic factors that are likely to determine when social identity will affect how consumers respond to brands, products or consumption behaviors.

FIGURE A-1²

TAXONOMIC CATEGORIZATION OF SOCIAL IDENTITIES

Type of Social Identity	Abstracted Referent(s)		Individual Referent(s)		Group Referent(s)		
	Fictitious Characters	Roles	Known	Not Known	All Members Known (Small)	All Members Not Known (Large)	Large Social Collective(s)
Description	Imaginary social constructions created by marketers, culture, and the popular media	Social construction of action patterns of consistent behaviors defined within membership in a particular self categorization	Actual individuals with which the person has personal contact with and wishes to maintain a self-defining relationship	Actual individuals with whom the person has no personal contact, but wishes to emulate in certain ways	Small actual membership reference groups typified by interaction amongst all group members	Large membership groups characterized by limited interaction, may be personified by a particular exemplar	Extremely large, amorphous and abstract groups of individuals, not likely to be personified by a particular exemplar
Relevant Extant Literature(s)		Role Identity theory	Identification based influence	Impression management theory	Reference Group theory	Self-Categorization Theory	Social Identity Theory
Example(s)	Comic book, Cartoon, story, film characters (e.g., Robin Hood, Superman, Neo from the Matrix) Gap Kids	Familial Roles (e.g., Mother, Father, son, daughter) Occupational Roles, relational roles (e.g., husband, girlfriend, etc.)	Ph.D. Advisor Big Brother Mentor High School Counselor Other individual role models	Spokespersons (e.g., Tiger Woods) musicians and artists, other pop cultural icons (e.g., The Pope Britney Spears	Peer Group(s) Immediate Family Graduate Student Cohort Neighborhood / Community Associations "Trench coat Mafia"	Gender Identity (Male, females) Athlete Identity, Ethnic Identity, Political Identities	National Identities (e.g., European, American, Self as Human being, etc.)

FIGURE A-2

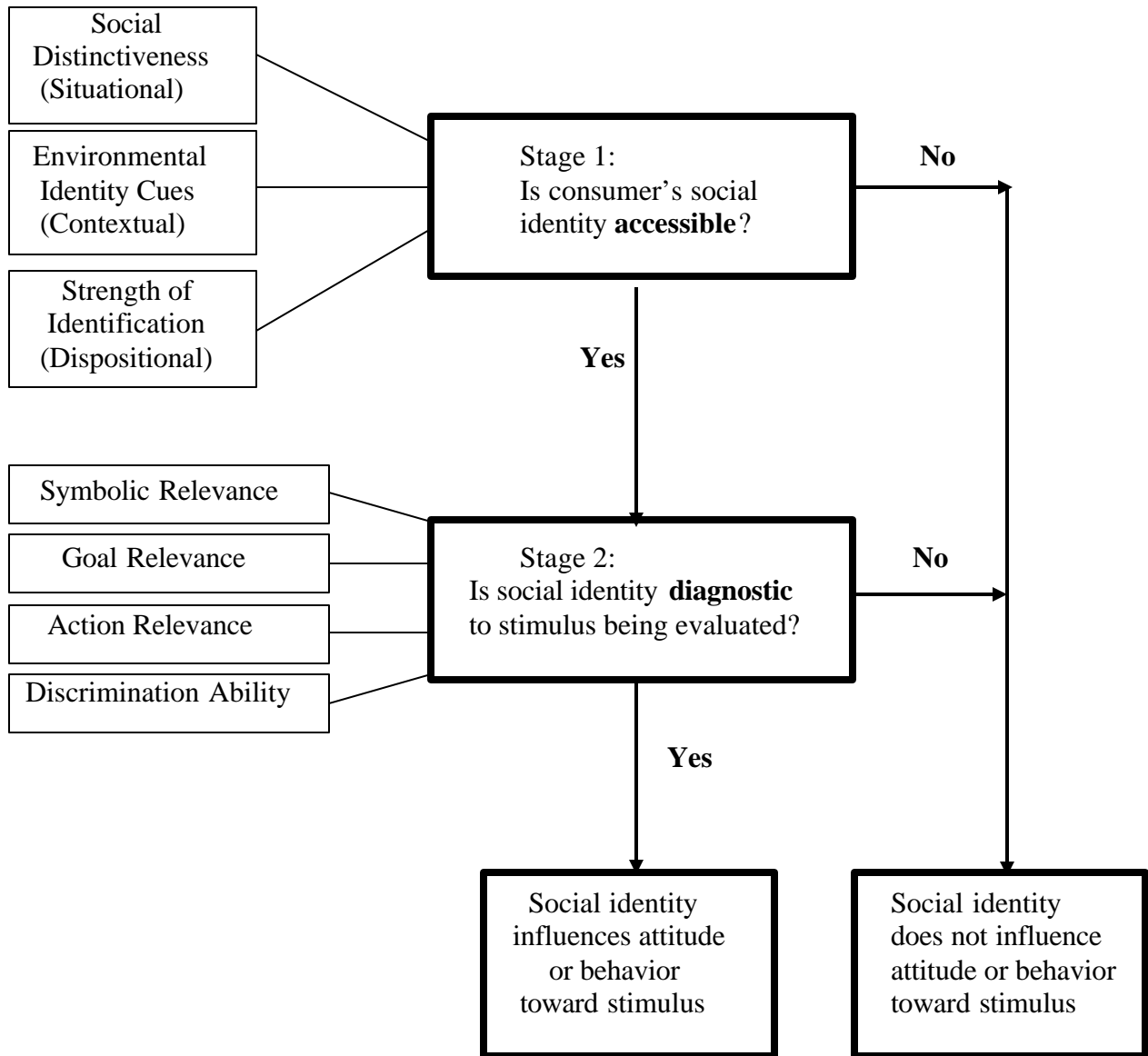


FIGURE A-3

AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION RESEARCH
IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

<i>Process Stage</i>	<i>Existing Research</i>
<i>Accessibility</i>	
<i>Social Distinctiveness</i>	<p>Numerical Distinctiveness (Grier and Brumbaugh, 2002; Cota and Dion 1986; McGuire and Padawer-Singer, 1976; McGuire, McGuire, Child and Fujioka, 1978; McGuire, McGuire and Winton, 1979)</p> <p>Social Status (Grier and Deshpande, 2002)</p> <p>Interacts with primes (Mandel and Johnson, 2002; Forehand, Deshpande and Reed 2002; Brumbaugh, 2002)</p> <p>Spokesperson Response (Deshpande and Stayman, 1994)</p> <p>Product response (Wooten 1995)</p>
<i>Identity Cues</i>	<p>Identity Salience and Product Choice (LeBoeuf and Shafir, 2003)</p> <p>Spokesperson Similarity Research (Kelman, 1961)</p> <p>Priming and Ad response (Forehand, Deshpande and Reed 2002; Forehand and Deshpande, 2001)</p> <p>Reference Group Symbols and identity activation (Cialdini et al 1976, Smith and Mackie 1995, Wilder and Shapiro 1984)</p> <p>Visual Images and processing (Hong et al. 2000, Chatman and von Hippel 2001 Aquino and Reed 2002; Brumbaugh 2002)</p> <p>Category primes and content processing (Mitchell, Banaji, and Nosek 1998)</p>
<i>Strength of Identification</i>	<p>Spokesperson response (Mathur, Mathur and Rangan, 1997; Saenz and Aguirre 1991; McCracken, 1989; Deshpande, Hoyer and Donthu, 1986; Hirschman 1981; Williams and Qualls 1989; Ellis et al 1985)</p> <p>Reflected Appraisals strengthen social identities (Laverie, Kleine and Kleine, 2002)</p> <p>Products cluster around important social identities (Kleine, Kleine and Kernan, 1993)</p> <p>Shared Cultural Knowledge (Brumbaugh 1997)</p> <p>Felt Ethnicity (Wooten and Galvin, 1993)</p> <p>Strength of Identity with Self-concept effects processing (Markus and Nuriou, 1986; Markus and Wurf, 1987; Symons and Johnson 1997; Kuiper and Rogers 1979)</p> <p>LeBoeuf and Shafir, 2002</p>

FIGURE A-3

AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION RESEARCH
IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Diagnosticity

Self-importance of identity and out-group judgments (Reed and Aquino, 2003)

Social Identity Function (Shavitt 1990)

Lifestyle Brands (Reed 2002)

Cultural meanings in ads (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999)

Brand Personality (Aaker 1997)

Possession and Self-image congruence (Kleine, Kleine and Allen, 1995)

Identity Expression (Solomon 1983)

Retail Selection (Sirgy et al 2000)

Brand Choice (Erikson and Sirgy 1989; Malhotra 1988; Birdwell 1968; Dolich 1969)

Identity and Brand Loyalty (Oliver 1999)

Sports Teams (Cialdini, et al.)

Inference of attitudes/affirmative action (Kravitz 1995)

Social norms dictate appropriate goals (Thibaut and Kelley 1959; Kelman 1958, 1961; Pruitt and Rubin 1986)

Goals create social reality (Turner and Killian 1972)

Product constellations are products needed to embody social identity (Solomon 1983)

Norm adherence (Cohen and Reed, 2000; Terry and Hogg, 1996)

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End Notes

¹ The personal and idiosyncratic set of possessions is different than stereotypical sets of objects linked to a corresponding role. For example, the possessions a consumer uses for gardening may differ from those associated with the typical gardener (Kleine, et. al 1993).

² The purpose of figure A-1 is to broadly organize examples of what is meant by “social identity” in this framework. The distinctions amongst examples are derived from various literatures across disciplines and hence are not perfectly delineated. For example, some researchers may treat gender identity as specific societal roles (c.f. Meyers-Levy 1988) linked to particular norms (e.g., agentic vs. communal orientations). In addition, some of the distinctions noted in Figure A-1 may be subsumed by others (e.g., a person may possess “African American” as part of their social identity, and may also identify with a particular exemplar of that social identity, e.g., Jesse Jackson—who may further represent another aspect of some other social identity—e.g., political identity of being a “Democrat.”) The point here is that the current framework considers each of these particular “referents” as having a potentially meaningful connotation to the consumer in any given immediate context. The emphasis here is on the factors that facilitate the process of these SIs affecting attitudes, judgments and behaviors. It is fully acknowledged that there may be distinct differences in the kinds of SIs depicted in Figure A-1, (e.g., level of abstractness, size of group, extent of actual interaction, etc.) that may have significance with respect to the process described in this paper.