CHAPTER 7

WHEN BRANDS ARE BUILT FROM WITHIN

A Social Identity Pathway to Liking and Evaluation

AMERICUS REED II, JOEL B. COHEN, AND AMIT BHATTACHARJEE

Social identity is represented by the collection of labels that consumers use to express who they are. These labels are numerous and fluid, varying over a consumer's lifetime and across consumption situations. From demographics (e.g., African American), social roles (e.g., parent), and shared consumption patterns (e.g., dieters), to identifiers created by marketers (e.g., Pepsi generation), there are a multitude of ways in which consumers can express their identities and distinguish themselves from others. Consumers are attracted to products and brands that are linked to actual and, particularly, desired social identities (Reed 2004; Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002; Stayman and Deshpande 1989). This happens for many reasons. For example, the brand or product may symbolize the consumer's personality traits (Aaker 1997), may reflect or support a desirable self-image, or may embody the "type" of person that the consumer aspires to think, feel, and be like (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982; cf. Levy 1959). Products and brands can even boost esteem through self-enhancement (Sedikides and Strube 1997) and self-verification (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995).

The outcome of symbolic, social identity-based preferences is often observed in marketing practice and frequently attributed at least partially to the success of many flagship brands and category leaders (e.g., Nike, Harley Davidson, Starbucks, Apple, Marlboro, Budweiser, Ikea, Jeep, MTV, Facebook). Strategists position brands and products to reflect a particular social identity–oriented lifestyle[1] in order to prompt more favorable judgments from consumers who either possess or identify with that social identity (Reed 2004) and to create a "deeper" sense of loyalty (Oliver 1999).

Underlying deeply loyal behavioral responses toward these brands is a systematic evaluative response—that is, a positive attitude. We posit that these positive attitudes stem from a markedly different formation and recruitment process, based on a consideration of the attitude object in relation to the self rather than object-based associations such as attributes or brand similarities (e.g., Cohen and Reed, 2006a). If these attitudes are "different" in any appreciable way from object/brand-based attitudes, and if marketers wish to encourage consumers to form strong, positive attitudes on the basis of a belief about who they are or want to become, then it will be important to understand this process and to consider its implications for marketing and brand management.

The idea that a consumer's sense of who they are should relate to purchase decisions has been widely discussed. It is well established that a consumer's identity sometimes motivates the formation and expression of identity-oriented beliefs, and, more importantly, the selection (avoidance) (see Berger and Heath 2008) of constellations of products and services that reinforce the desired (undesired) identity (Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993; Laverie, Kleine, and Kleine 2002; Forehand et al. 2002; Reed 2004). How and why social identity plays a substantial role in brand evaluations in some cases and not others is less well understood. Shavitt (1990) insightfully linked certain brand attitudes to a "value-expressive" function earlier identified by attitude theorists (Katz 1960; Smith, Bruner, and White 1956). Perhaps such identity-based judgments are "socially anchored" (McGarty et al. 1994; Pilkington and Lydon 1997), thereby leading to further reinforcement within social networks comprising others who also share that attitude (Visser and Mirabile 2004); this would make them particularly resistant to change (Bolton and Reed 2004).

However, very little research in marketing has systematically examined the process of how social identity–based attitudes are formed and the potential advantages that may accrue to these kinds of evaluative judgments (for exceptions see Forehand et al. 2002; Reed 2004; Bolton and Reed 2004). Moreover, little work has addressed the *strategic implications* of when and how brand judgments are impacted by identity processes. This is an important area in marketing because *product positioning* can occur around attributes and key features, versus being positioned around a social identity–based lifestyle (see Reed and Bolton 2005).

The purpose of this chapter is to set forth a more detailed conceptual analysis of how attitudes come to be formed "based on" social identity, and what the implications of this pathway to evaluation are for branding and marketing. The first part of this chapter describes how attitudes, once generated, are assessed for behavioral reliance (Cohen and Reed 2006a). We focus on particular factors that affect how social identity–based attitudes accrue (1) clarity and coherence through an initial metacognitive assessment we term *representational sufficiency* and (2) appropriateness for particular behavioral applications through a subsequent assessment we term *functional sufficiency* (see Cohen and Reed 2006a). The second part of this chapter relies on recent work in social identity theory (Bolton and Reed 2004; Forehand et al. 2002; Reed 2004) to describe and illustrate a social identity pathway to liking and evaluation. The last portion of this chapter focuses on implications for brand managers who either seek to position start-up brands or reposition existing brands. We conclude with the special case of co-branding alliances (see Verrochi and Reed 2008) in which two brand identities must be simultaneously managed to create favorable evaluations toward the co-branded effort. Along the way, we illustrate our points by summarizing past research and also by referring to and describing our own ongoing preliminary work in this area.

A MODEL OF ATTITUDE GENERATION AND RECRUITMENT

Cohen and Reed's (2006a) Multiple Pathway Anchoring and Adjustment (MPAA) model discusses alternative pathways to attitude formation and the process by which consumers rely on attitudes (or don't) when they decide to act in a particular way. A long-standing tradition in marketing has assumed that consumer attitudes toward branded products typically result from an assessment of each product's attributes, derived benefits, positive reaction to associated advertising, spokespeople, and so on. The "raw material" for such evaluations (i.e., the object itself) lies outside the person. Cohen and Reed (2006a) make the case that attitudes can also be formed based primarily on "inside-out" social identity–based evaluations of people, issues, and objects, such as branded products. In the second part of their model they explain that subsequent behavior does not follow directly from retrieval of attitudes, regardless of how they were formed. Their MPAA model lays out a process through which consumers rely on retrieved attitudes that may be formed on the basis of social identity, modify those attitudes by integrating other relevant information into them, or reject those attitudes in favor of a more context-driven evaluation of perceived alternatives.

The Prevailing View

The correspondence principle (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein 2005) for predicting behavior (i.e., predictive attitudes should fully correspond to the details of the behavior—donating $100 to a presidential candidate within the next thirty days, versus general attitudes toward that politician) provides very helpful measurement advice. However, it is difficult to imagine consumers storing and retrieving an almost infinite array of such action-specific attitudes. So, current process-oriented models that intend to describe how and when attitudes guide behavior and promote resistance to persuasion have moved in a different direction. Despite nuances of meaning and preferences for particular measures and manipulations, a consensus has emerged that strong and favorable attitudes, held with sufficient certainty, not only confer resistance to attitude change attempts but also produce attitude-consistent behavior. Tormala and Rucker (2007) define attitude certainty as follows:

> Whereas an attitude refers to one's evaluation of something (e.g., the extent to which one likes a person, favors a brand, or supports a policy), attitude certainty refers to the subjective sense of conviction one has about one's attitude, or the extent to which one is confident or sure of one's attitude (p. 469, citations deleted).

They add:

> Attitude certainty is considered to be a dimension of attitude strength, where attitude strength is defined as the durability and impactfulness of an attitude. In general, strong attitudes are more durable and impactful than are weak attitudes. Compared to weak attitudes, then, strong attitudes are more likely to guide behavior, more likely to resist influence attempts, and more likely to persist across time (pp. 469–470, citations deleted).

Discussion of this "subjective sense of conviction" has recently given rise to a focus on certain types of metacognitive assessments of consumer attitudes. Metacognitive assessments represent secondary thoughts about internal states and knowledge (in this case attitudes) that allow people to monitor their meaning and relevance, and to direct subsequent thought and action (see Petty, Brinol, Tormala, and Wegener 2007 for an extended discussion). Attitude certainty, a pivotal dimension of attitudes under the prevailing view, has been associated with subjective assessments of clarity and correctness (Petrocelli, Tormala, and Rucker 2007).

But what is it, exactly, that consumers need to be certain about before relying on their attitudes for purchases and related consumer behaviors? Will a subjective assessment of an attitude's inherent (i.e., self-contained) clarity and correctness be sufficient to lead consumers to rely on it in making decisions? Furthermore, is the underlying assumption that attitude strength (however well measured) provides a firm basis for behavioral predictions correct? Some evidence calls this bedrock assumption into question: models highlighting intrinsic (i.e., apart from a behavioral context) attitude assessment alone are not sufficient. Specifically, studies have shown substantial self-correction of even strongly held attitudes (i.e., to overcome the effects of bias, prejudice, temporary moods, and heightened accessibility of a partial subset of attitude-relevant beliefs) when consumers are motivated to make good decisions and/or be accountable for them (Wegener and Petty 1997; Dunton and Fazio 1997; Dovidio et al., 1997; Cohen, Belyavsky, and Silk 2008) or when reduced self-efficacy or perceived behavioral control (Bandura 1982; Ajzen and Madden 1986; Ajzen and Fishbein 2005) diminishes willingness to rely on such attitudes.

MPAA's View of Metacognitive Assessments

We believe a more complete and accurate depiction of the self-interrogation process through which consumers make judgments regarding the adequacy of their attitudes cannot terminate when consumers assess an attitude as being held with a high degree of certainty, conviction, or strength. Instead, we argue that consumers sequentially make two very different assessments of a retrieved attitude (Cohen and Reed 2006a). The first, representational sufficiency (RS), overlaps with clarity and correctness dimensions identified in the previously mentioned stream of research and with the aligned notion of metacognitive "validity tags," as advanced by Petty and colleagues (Petty 2006; Petty et al. 2007). However, RS also includes the subjective assessment of personal ownership of the attitude, which will be discussed further.

The implicit decision to *rely* on one's attitude is more a question of its appropriateness for the specific behavior in question (or diagnosticity; see Lynch 2006; Cohen and Reed 2006b) than its inherent correctness. Cohen and Reed (2006a) term this assessment *functional sufficiency* (FS). One fairly general factor influencing functional sufficiency that may not be reflected in attitude certainty or correctness was investigated by Fabrigar, Petty, Smith, and Crites (2006). They showed that people were more likely to use their attitudes to guide behavior when these attitudes were based on multiple and consistent dimensions of knowledge rather than a single basis even though there were no differences in attitude certainty. When attitudes have multiple bases, they seem more widely applicable to a variety of contexts, thereby suggesting a metacognitive link to functional sufficiency (Petty 2006).

A recent study further clarifies the separate role of functional sufficiency in MPAA. Cohen, Belyavsky, and Silk (2008) found that attitudes toward purchasing a product accompanied by a rebate were primarily associated with the desirability of the downstream savings. This is because people focused more on benefits than on the feasibility of carrying out steps necessary to redeem the rebate, even though these steps were not exceptional and should have been anticipated. Among those subsequently asked to visualize each of the rebate redemption steps, however, the balance between desirability and feasibility changed. Initial attitudes proved to be a poor predictor of whether people would again choose the rebate option relative to an initial (but less compelling) purchase price. Thus, intrinsic assessments of attitude clarity, correctness, certainty, and strength appear to miss the subsequent and behavioral context-focused assessment that Cohen and Reed (2006a) refer to as functional sufficiency.

The position advocated by Cohen and Reed (2006a) notes that previous conceptions of the attitude-behavior relationship were remarkably static: essentially that correctly measured attitudes (i.e., incorporating some aspects of strength) at time one would predict behavior at some subsequent time as long as outside factors did not intervene. Instead, Cohen and Reed (2006a) do not assume that attitudes will predict behavior. They assume that these evaluative assessments will be stored and retrieved just like any other information, but because evaluative assessments of focal objects, other consumers, and other issues are more relevant to action than the individual pieces of information about them, attitudes are more likely than any other information to *guide* behavior. The difference between *predict* and *guide* is extremely important. The model advanced by Cohen and Reed (2006a) assumes that attitudes will guide behavior, but will only predict behavior when people believe they can rely on those attitudes to direct whatever consumer behavior is under consideration.

MPAA and Social Identity–Based Attitudes

As discussed, MPAA asserts that consumers subjectively assess two aspects of their attitudes at different points in time to make a given judgment. First, they assess an attitude's representational sufficiency when it is retrieved from memory and is used to make any judgment (such as liking). Consumers want to be confident that the retrieved attitude is clear and coherent and represents their own point of view. While these first two dimensions correspond to some extent with clarity and correctness, the latter dimension is unique to MPAA. Suppose that a person brings to mind a product evaluation that is recalled as being supplied by some other person or perhaps as inferred from an ad. To the extent that the source of that information is salient, personal ownership may be lacking, and the attitude may be weaker than it originally appears to be. One could argue, however, that this should show up in an assessment of correctness or certainty. While that may be possible, if we are trying to identify the relevant metacognitive assessments people actually make, we should separate those that are clearly different (both substantively and temporally). Consistent with this position, the aforementioned study by Fabrigar and colleagues is an argument against relying on assessments of structural dimensions of attitudes (such as certainty and strength) when examining attitude-behavior relationships. Recall that despite no differences in attitude certainty, attitudes differed in applicability when there was a broader basis for assessments of relevance. Thus, the attitude became a stronger argument for engaging in the behavior (Fabrigar, MacDonald, and Wegener 2005).

MPAA acknowledges that any factor comprising or influencing the content of an attitude that facilitates feelings of certainty will increase the likelihood that the attitude possesses relatively high representational sufficiency. Social identity–based attitudes are not driven by information about the object per se, but rather by information internal to the person about how the object relates to the person's social identity. Because these attitudes are often derived from norms linked to particular social identities, forming a social identity–based attitude is likely to have social consensus properties (beliefs that this attitude is also held by others who share that social identity) and personal ownership (because the social identity–based attitude is more deeply linked to a person's sense of who they are). In addition, forming, holding, and expressing a social identity–based attitude is likely to serve self-enhancement and self-verification goals. Both of these advantages—greater ownership and satisfaction of self goals—imply greater feelings of certainty and commitment.

Based on this reasoning, social identity–based attitudes may, in general, appear to be higher in representational sufficiency than object-based attitudes. However, people occupy multiple roles and think about themselves somewhat differently depending on their social surroundings as well as on thoughts that "prime" different aspects of self (e.g., making family, gender, race, occupation, aspirations more salient). Accordingly, attitudes formed in one context may not generalize as well to other contexts where somewhat different priorities and values are important. If that is the case, social identity–based attitudes should be less "stable" over time than attitudes based on consistent properties of objects, including brands. Such a difference would not be expected whenever the social identity basis for the attitude is highly central to the person, and thus a reasonably permanent aspect of who the person considers himself or herself to be. Though our analysis is speculative in the absence of significant empirical research, it suggests that marketers would be taking greater risks by attempting to link their brands to more transient (and especially "made up") product personalities as a way of forming favorable brand attitudes, as these attitudes might then be unstable and lack representational sufficiency. However, in product categories with accelerated growth, where differentiation must be created quickly and often, such an approach may be less risky if it allows marketers to respond more quickly to market dynamics by repositioning brands to align with more transitory marketer-driven product personalities.

According to MPAA, consumers subsequently assess the attitude's functional sufficiency when the representationally sufficient attitude is brought to mind as a potential guide to some behavior. The question they ask at that point is whether the attitude is an adequate guide to whatever specific behavior is being contemplated. If consumers assess the attitude as functionally sufficient, it will both guide and predict behavior. If consumers are confronted with unanticipated or changed information about the object (often because contextual factors make other issues, such as attitudes toward risk or interpersonal implications, salient), that additional information (whether perception- or memory-based) will be integrated into the retrieved attitude and used to guide behavior. Cohen and Reed (2006a) describe this in terms of an anchoring and adjustment process in which the amount of adjustment (i.e., from a further search for and integration of information) is a function of the perceived importance/riskiness of the behavior, in keeping with concepts common to Fazio's MODE model (Motivation and Opportunity as Determinants of attitude-behavior consistency; Fazio and Towles-Schwen 1999) and Chen and Chaiken's sufficiency principle (1999).

Another key question is whether social identity–based attitudes are likely to be different in functional sufficiency than object-based attitudes. Attitudes that are likely to "power through" changes in context are likely to be those that truly matter to you. Therefore, more fundamental (in terms of being self-defining) social identity–based attitudes are very likely to have a considerable advantage. Whether and when that advantage is likely to manifest itself in consumer decision making (e.g., how central or self-defining such attitudes are) deserves study. Our next step is to discuss the social identity pathway to attitude formation in greater depth, including when such attitudes are likely to be relevant and important, when they are salient, and how stable they are likely to be (vs. easy to change).

SOCIAL IDENTITY–BASED ATTITUDES: BASIC DEFINITIONS

Attitudes Based on an External (Object) versus Internal (Social Identity) Focus

The separation of the psychological environment into self (person) and object (Lewin 1951) has been a staple of theory and research (Heider 1958; Jones and Davis 1965). For example, causal attributions (Kelley and Michela 1980) are generally categorized as either external (i.e., the salient object, external actor, or situational condition) or internal (i.e., the self). A similar analogy can be made in the domain of attitude formation. For our purposes, an *object-oriented attitude* refers to any attitude whose focal point is external to the consumer, hence strongly associated with some object, issue, or person. Most products have benefits or features that could be used to define them and presumably differentiate them from other potential competitive offerings. When brand managers develop such a product concept they often choose levels of these attributes that are designed to be very close to the ideal points of targeted segments of consumers. Then brand managers attempt to communicate attribute positioning to the end consumer. This is effective presumably because consumers often consider the brand and its product concept in a feature-driven fashion—by thinking about certain attributes that define the product concept and how important those attributes are for that product category. This may happen systematically via an analytical impression formation process, merely through associative linkages forged by product experience or advertising, or even some heuristic, such as product similarity–based inferences. For example, an object-oriented attitude toward a branded product may be based on direct experience with the brand, information from other sources (e.g., *Consumer Reports,* advertising), or inferences from related objects or categorical representations (e.g., a brand extension may be evaluated based on attitude toward the company).

In contrast, a *social identity–oriented* attitude is linked to aspects of one's self-identity, such as personal values, roles, and social identity. For example, a person might develop a favorable attitude toward some particular conservation-related behavior based on thoughts about "being an environmentalist" (see Bolton and Reed 2004). Thus, the beliefs that function as building blocks of such self-oriented attitudes are likely to be different in content than those supporting an object-oriented attitude. In these instances, rather than a focus on the object and its features or attributes per se, the consumer's evaluative processes may be disproportionately driven by thoughts about one's self-concept or one's current or desired social identity. For example, when buying clothing, how often have you thought to yourself, "Is this me?" or "What sort of impression will I make?" Surprisingly, the self-object distinction—although proven to be important in understanding perception and attribution processes—has not been a major focus in the attitude literature. We now turn to a more formal conceptualization that attempts to detail this process: that is, when attitudes come to be formed on the basis of one or more salient social identities. We begin with the definition of social identity as we use it in this chapter.

Social Identity

The analysis begins with the idea that consumers think about themselves in terms of various social identities (cf. Tajfel 1959; Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner and Oakes 1986) and at any given point in time will have available a subset of social categories that can become a part of the "working" or "spontaneous" self-concept (Markus and Nurius 1988; McGuire, McGuire, and Winton 1979). A consumer may adopt a social category as a social identity in order to think about various actions or judgments (see Reed 2004). For clarity of exposition, a *social category* refers to any of the vast number of potential social constructions that may come from culture, the organization of society, mass media, peer groups, and so on. The term *social identity* refers to the actuated perspective or frame of reference that a consumer possesses as part of the repertoire of who they are or who they want to appear to be. Accordingly, some thought process actuates a social identity that the person is prepared to adopt (based on prior learning and, importantly, a judgment of personal relevance) in order to judge or evaluate some other person, object, or action (see Reed and Forehand 2008).

A Social Identity Pathway to Liking and Evaluation

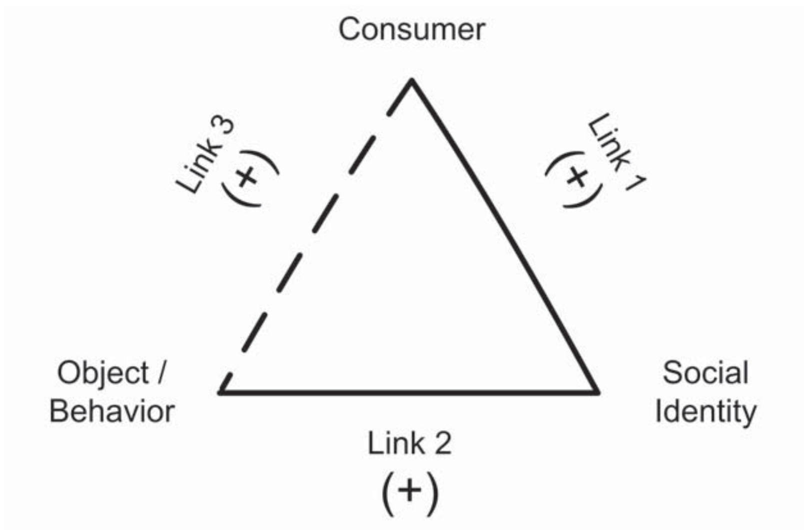
We now elaborate on the specific process of how a consumer forms an attitude based on social identity. We term this process a social identity pathway to liking and evaluation, and base it on the following premise. As mentioned in the previous section, a consumer has a multitude of social identities that they may adopt. These social identities are more than just labels. They are knowledge structures organized around schema of different information (e.g., the image of the kind of person likely to hold that particular social identity, beliefs, values, and norms that are strongly associated with group members who also share that social identity). The content of the knowledge structure that comes to mind when a social identity is made salient is the basis for responding to (i.e., evaluating) objects and objects of thoughts. To the extent that a social identity is a salient basis for self definition, and that social identity is important to the person and provides a basis for responding to the object, there is an increased likelihood that an individual will base their attitude on that social identity.

It is possible for different social identities to have very different evaluative implications with respect to a particular attitude object. As an example, one of the most important public policy issues we face is likely to involve raising the retirement age for Medicare eligibility. If people think about the issue as “senior citizens” (with their senior citizen hat on, so to speak), then they might be opposed to it and perhaps bring pressure on both political parties. But if they were to think about the issue as “Americans,” they might conclude that this type of Medicare reform is good for everyone, and their response to the issue could be totally different. Recent research that we have conducted is consistent with this notion. A study by Aquino and colleagues (Aquino et al. 2007) found significant reduction of the positive relationship between moral disengagement and pro-war–related thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors when people’s moral identity was either chronically salient or primed. However, this relationship was *strengthened* whenever American identity was chronically salient or temporarily primed (see Finnel et al. 2008). We interpret these findings as evidence of different evaluative recruitment processes that arise as a person thinks about an attitude object from the perspective of a particular identity that may be salient at the time of attitude formation. It is possible to elicit differential evaluative responses based on particular social identities that may be cued by the environment, and indeed, these different social identities may have completely different evaluative implications for that attitude object. This carries implications for how one might balance these potential different selves and the attitudes recruited from them.

Balancing Social Identity, Brand, and Self-Concept

One may think of the multitude of various possible social identities as akin to viewing an ambiguous attitude object through various phenomenological lenses, with each lens linked to a particular social identity. Each lens would thus represent learned and socialized group norms that reflect collective beliefs and values, which are in turn rooted in those external social categories that may be adopted by the individual consumer as one of many social identities. This readily applies to the case of brands and products and other consumer behaviors. Figure 7.1 illustrates this graphically.[2] One can think about the links between any individual consumer, a social identity, and any object, and identify attitudinal implications derived from a social identity pathway to evaluation. For example, the link between a consumer and a social identity (link 1 in Figure 7.1) represents the strength/likelihood of that social identity coming to mind and being important to that consumers’ overall self-definition. This has been discussed in terms of centrality (Deshpande and Stayman 1994; Deshpande, Hoyer, and Donthu 1986) or self-importance (Aquino and Reed

Figure 7.1 **A Social Identity Pathway to Evaluation**



2002), as well as the accessibility of that social identity.[3] With similar reasoning, one can also consider the link between a social identity and a specific object, issue, or behavior (link 2 in Figure 7.1) as identity relevance (Reed 2004), applicability, or "diagnosticity" (Feldman and Lynch 1988). The extent to which link 1 and link 2 are congruent (i.e., balanced and positive) implies the formation of a favorable consumer attitude, as shown in terms of an evaluative response from the consumer toward the object in question (link 3 in Figure 7.1). As per MPAA, such a generated attitude would then be subject to both an RS and FS assessment before it would be recruited as a guide for behavior.

To illustrate this attitude formation logic, consider the social identity of "athlete." A consumer might adopt this social identity and use its associated evaluative content [e.g., perceptions of what an athlete thinks (attitudes) and does (behaviors)] as the basis to form an attitude (e.g., attitude toward Nike sports shoes or attitudes toward exercise). This process is likely to result in a collectively anchored 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 social identity to others (Shavitt 1990). Existing research corroborates this point and illustrates the balance logic mentioned previously and graphically depicted in Figure 7.1. In the attitude literature, Terry and Hogg (1996) argued that psychological "group membership" should influence people's attitudes. They 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 (Terry and Hogg 1996, experiment 1; see also Ybarra and Trafimow 1998). In the substantive area of biased information scanning, researchers found that, compared to white females, black females who had recently had their ethnic (female) identity made salient had more favorable (unfavorable) perceptions of O.J. Simpson's innocence (Newman et al. 1997). In the stereotype literature, another study demonstrated that when a particular social identity was made salient at an implicit level, performance was altered in the direction predicted by the stereotype associated with the social identity. In this study, Shih, Pittinsky, and Ambady (1999) found that Asian-American women performed better on a math test when their ethnic identity was activated, but worse when their gender identity was activated, compared with a control group who had neither social identity activated. These three studies are consistent with the idea that there is a unit (e.g., ownership, membership) relationship between the person and the group (i.e., the social identity), and that the group's values/beliefs are directionally relevant to the issue, leading the person to adopt the group's attitude.

Although the previously mentioned studies are consistent with the logic inherent in a social identity pathway to liking and evaluation, Reed and Cohen (2009) provide what might be the first direct test of this logic. In their study, they sought to experimentally manipulate the links in Figure 7.1. All participants (women exclusively) in the study first provided their initial attitude toward a number of issues including affirmative action to deal with glass ceiling problems facing women. Then participants engaged in an online chatroom discussion with other group members (actually a computer-driven set of responses) in which the group members in certain conditions gave solid reasons to support an attitude that was opposite to each participant's initial attitude, instantiating the link between the social identity and the issue (link 2 in Figure 7.1). Several days later, participants received a phone call from an ostensibly unrelated national polling agency and were queried about their attitude on the critical issue, among other things. At the outset of this phone call, the social identity that all participants had reflected on in the prior chatroom setting was either made salient or not by a subtle difference in the name of the organization "sponsoring" the survey. Heightening the salience of the particular social identity was intended to instantiate link 1 of Figure 7.1 and was expected to affect the attitudes people recruited; either their initial attitudes *or* their chatroom-based social identity attitudes toward the issue. Only when the chatroom social identity was made salient were attitudes that had been developed in the identity-relevant context, rather than initial attitudes, used to provide survey responses (Reed and Cohen, 2009, study 2). Interestingly, subsequent survey questions showed that both initial attitudes and newly created attitudes (for participants in chatroom contexts where these were formed) were available, thereby implicating some combination of attitude recruitment (probably due to heightened salience) and willingness to rely on the recruited attitude, hence functional sufficiency.

A Different Kind of Social Influence in Attitude Formation

Social identification implies a psychological connection with some other person or group (Deaux 1996). Early in life, identification is considered a largely automatic (as opposed to strategic) process of imitating referent others who serve as models for beliefs, values, and behaviors (as well as many other learned behaviors). In later stages of maturation, the identification process involves conscious choice and discrimination among possible social identities (Higgins, Loeb, and Moretti 1995). For example, Kelman's (1958, 1961,

2006) typology of social influence uses the term *identification* to describe situations where an individual willingly adopts an attitudinal position whether or not the referent other intends this outcome or is even aware of the person's desire to close the psychological distance between them. The motivation for adopting the position is that it establishes or maintains a positive self-defining relationship with the referent other (see also French and Raven 1959). Unlike informational influence, the recipient makes no assessment of the likelihood that the referent's position is in any way "correct," and is not dependent on a context in which social reality is substituted due to the person's inability to determine objective reality. It is important to note that an *identification process* (Kelman 1958) is also very different from a *compliance-based process* in that it is not dependent on the referent other's direct surveillance of the individual's behavior nor rewards and punishments associated with refusal to adopt the referent other's particular attitudinal position.

Normative social influence processes have probably received more attention and are certainly important in some instances. If consumers are made to believe that important others will vehemently disapprove of some behavior, then that behavior is less likely to manifest publicly if the consumer is motivated to comply with that referent. This suggests that marketers who are interested in curtailing potentially harmful behaviors such as smoking and alcohol use or who are interested in facilitating productive behaviors such as recycling and donating blood could make use of compliance-based pressures associated with peer groups or external others who are likely to administer punishments and rewards based on observable behaviors (e.g., only dopes take dope/your grandchildren will thank you for a healthy planet). However, there may be real advantages to considering attitude formation through a social identity pathway, since this leads to actual acceptance of the evaluation and does not depend on a combination of surveillance and reward/punishment power. For example, consumer researchers could follow a strategy that strengthens the link between the individual consumer and some important social identity (link 1 in Figure 7.1). In the recycling example, a persuasive communication might emphasize the "global community" and its importance to the self-definition of the individual consumer. So the emphasis would be on solidifying and reinforcing the extent to which an individual consumer will adopt the perspective, or wear the hat, that is associated with that social identity. Once this is established, then the communications strategy can focus on the link between that social identity and certain behaviors (link 2 in Figure 7.1).

In summary, the consumer researcher would be facilitating the likelihood that a social identity–based consumer attitude will come to mind and guide behavior. This is done by increasing the likelihood that (1) a consumer will possess what Heider (1958) described as a unit relationship between an individual and a behaviorally relevant social identity and (2) the social identity in question (member of the global community) provides a logically consistent basis for a positive attitude toward recycling. Some recent research in our own program further demonstrates the usefulness of this analysis for behavioral change interventions. A study by Finnel, Reed, Volpp, and Armstrong (2008) found that the likelihood of maintaining an ongoing medication protocol in a sample of male hypertension patients was a function of the extent to which a patient's attitudes toward hypertension were related to their social identities. More specifically, the study revealed a positive relationship between the medication's anticipated impact on the self-image and compliance intentions. Unexpectedly, however, this positive relationship was much weaker when patients' prior involvement in sports and athletics was a central part of their social identity and when they believed they currently possessed feelings of strength, power, and independence. Why did this happen, and what can be done to overcome the problem? Applying the logic of Figure 7.1, open-ended protocols with the patients revealed a negative relationship between the concept of "athlete and sports participant" and the behavior of "taking medicine" (link 2 in Figure 7.1). Our data suggested that this relationship emerges because of the inconsistency inherent between the social identity (which represents strength, power, and autonomy) and the act (which represents being sickly and weak). Hence, for those patients who had a strong positive link to that social identity, they resolved the imbalance by not adhering to their medication protocols. In addition to collecting information about patients' objectively verifiable health indicators, practitioners may wish to ask patients about their views of themselves and/or assess the salience and importance of certain social identities that may conflict with certain medical protocols. This kind of information can then be used to determine an appropriate behavioral intervention for each patient. Such insight would have been much less likely to have emerged within the traditional views of social factors within attitude theory. These kinds of intervention-relevant insights (that come from a consideration of social identity–based attitudes) offer some promise when attempting to create favorable consumption behaviors and deter unfavorable ones in important areas of public policy in marketing (Wilkie 2005).

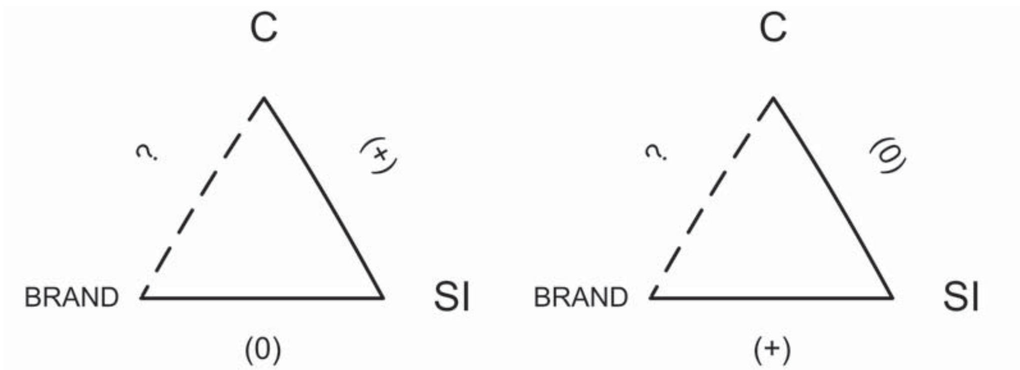
SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES FOR BRAND MANAGERS

Implications for Branding

Though conceptualizations and methods of measuring it vary, brand equity can generally be defined in terms of the portion of marketing outcomes that can be attributed solely to the brand (Keller 1993). Building a strong brand—one that communicates a set of clear, coherent associations that distinguish it from competitive offerings—has a number of financial and strategic advantages, such as enhanced customer loyalty and the ability to charge price premiums (e.g., Aaker 1997; Keller 2003). For brand equity to be meaningful, brand attitudes or consumers' overall summary evaluations of a brand must be recalled and used in guiding consumption behavior. The MPAA perspective raises a number of substantive issues concerning the management of brands and brand attitudes that may be driven by social identity.

A great deal of research has focused on external, tangible, product-related aspects of brands. For example, the literature in consumer behavior on developing and positioning new brands has focused on the way in which new members to a brand or product category are evaluated (see Loken 2006, for a review). Existing categories are seen as sets of both attributes and exemplars, and accessible category information is used to evaluate new entrants based on perceived similarity (e.g., Loken, Joiner, and Peck 2002; Meyvis and Janiszewski 2004). Thus, much attention has been given to positioning new brands with

Figure 7.2 **The Brand-Specific Case of New vs. Existing Social Identities**



respect to existing competitors and category members, with the focus on brand attributes—in other words, outside-in routes to brand attitude formation. However, MPAA proposes that consideration of inside-out routes to brand attitude formation (i.e., those that rely on internal, psychological aspects of consumers, such as social identity) is equally pivotal, and practitioners as well as researchers may have much to gain from broadening their perspectives (Cohen and Reed 2006a).

Creating a Social Identity–Based Brand Attitude from Scratch

If social identity often serves a social adjustment function for consumers who wish to reinforce their connection to similar (real or imagined) others and create separation from dissimilar (real or imagined) others (Smith et al. 1956, p. 42), then a consumer's social identity facilitates this adjustment by directing the consumer to specific beliefs and behaviors that signal identification externally to society and internally to the self. The connection between the self and a brand is widely regarded as being forged through a matching process, whereby consumers strive for congruity between their self-image and a brand image (e.g., Escalas and Bettman 2003; Sirgy 1982). But how can managers foster this connection with a new brand? Our account underscores the importance of consistency (i.e., cognitive balance) between consumers, a social identity they possess (or want to possess), and an attitude object (in this case, a specific brand or product). The account we have presented provides clear implications for managers attempting to create a social identity–based brand attitude from scratch. From a managerial point of view, in order to foster a positive and accessible social identity–based brand attitude, managers must consider all three links depicted in Figure 7.1. Figure 7.2 is a brand-specific modification of Figure 7.1 that graphically depicts the step-by-step logic associated with facilitating a social identity–based attitude for a new brand.

As part of a market segmentation approach, brand managers should first consider the full market of consumers, and identify individual segments that can be meaningfully grouped in terms of social identities that already exist in society, or who have the potential to be personified because they project personally desired categorical associations and dissociations. Each selected social identity must be clear and differentiated from others that already may be linked to existing competitive brands. Brand managers should link (positively or negatively) their brand to symbolic associations that embody the chosen social identity. These associations might include reference group symbols (Cialdini et al. 1976; Smith and Mackie 1995), symbols related to outgroups (see Berger and Heath 2008; Wilder and Shapiro 1984), outgroup members themselves (Marques, Yzerbyt, and Rijsman 1988), or visual images and words (Hong et al. 2000; Chatman and von Hippel 2001; Forehand and Deshpandé 2001; Forehand et al. 2002).

The most straightforward approach to establishing a social identity–based brand attitude from scratch is to position a brand so that it fits an existing social identity (e.g., Aaker 1997; Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982; Sirgy 1982). In other words, a strong positive association already exists between the consumer and the social identity (C → SI; Figure 7.2, left panel), but no association as of yet between that social identity and the brand (SI → BRAND). In this case, the marketer's task is to establish a link between the identity and the brand. To the extent that the brand is representative of the social identity–oriented lifestyle, consumers who possess that identity should develop a positive, accessible attitude toward the brand. If this segment of consumers deems the brand to be expressive of the values associated with their social identity (Shavitt 1990), then they may exhibit a deeper sense of identification and loyalty toward the brand (Oliver 1999; Reed 2004).

For example, Harley Davidson is strongly linked to a social identity of a rebel image. In other words, the existing social identity represents outsider status (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, p. 58), a degree of marginality, and an outlaw culture (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Schouten and McAlexander (1995, p. 50) describe the connection of the Harley Davidson brand with its consumer community as so powerful that the brand is "in effect, a religious icon, around which an entire ideology of consumption is articulated." While this may be an extreme example of a brand community, it is a clear demonstration of how brands can resonate with consumers (the BRAND → C link in Figure 7.2), leading to a socially embedded, entrenched sense of brand loyalty that is driven by the consumer connection to others who embrace the social identity represented by the brand.

Given that consumers already possess the social identity and define themselves in terms of it, the marketer's challenge lies in convincing consumers that the social identity is relevant and applicable to the evaluation of the brand. Social identities that are fundamental and deeply held by consumers are likely to guide behavior across a variety of contexts. Adding cues to the external environment (e.g., through media campaigns) that reinforce the connection between the brand and the social identity may make it more salient and accessible to consumers (e.g., Cialdini et al. 1976; Forehand et al. 2002). Furthermore, by adding identity cues to the evaluation or purchase environment, marketers can increase the chances that the social identity will be activated within the purchase context, so that evaluation and behavior are driven by attitudes related to that identity (Reed 2004). For example, retailers such as H&M strive to create a hip, fashionable purchase environment, while Nike and Foot Locker incorporate athletic symbols and equipment, so that the appropriate social identities are cued, driving consumer brand evaluation and behavior.

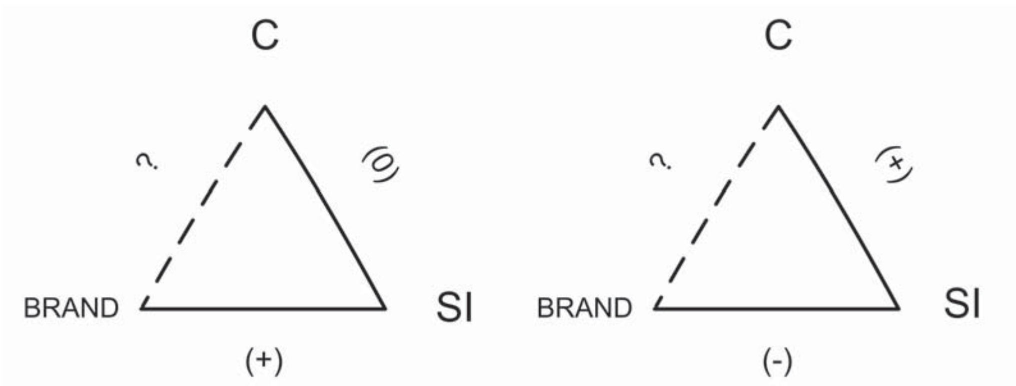
Alternatively, marketers might encourage interactive activities that embody the social identity–oriented lifestyle in question and involve consumers. For example, Red Bull has built a devoted brand community by sponsoring activities centered on a young, creative, "extreme sports culture" social identity that is closely associated with the brand.

Another possible approach to positioning a new brand is the creation of a new, marketer-defined social identity that is closely aligned with the brand. This represents a scenario in which a positive association exists between the brand and a social identity (SI → BRAND; Figure 7.2, right panel), but none exists between the social identity and the consumer (C → SI; Figure 7.2, right panel). Thus, the marketer's challenge is to foster a connection and sense of personal resonance between a segment of consumers and the identity. To the extent that this link can be established (i.e., that consumers adopt the social identity as important to their self-definitions), consumers should form positive associations toward the brand. Furthermore, given the link between the identity and the brand, once an attitude has been acquired, it seems likely that consumers will bring it to mind when a relevant product decision is being made. Whether they will act on this attitude (i.e., whether it will be functionally sufficient) depends on factors discussed earlier in the chapter, especially the importance of the aspect of self-identity (relative to other aspects) and the degree to which ownership of this brand is viewed as a defining aspect of that self-identity.

The ongoing "Mac vs. PC" advertisements produced by Apple are a good example of a social identity–oriented marketing campaign with social identities essentially created by marketers. The Mac is represented by a laid-back, artistic-looking young man in casual, hip clothing, while the PC is represented by an uptight, nerdy-looking older man in glasses and a conservative suit. Though the advertisements often discuss product attributes, their main thrust is to present these two characters as embodiments of the respective brands. In other words, the advertisements clearly depict the social identity associated with Apple computers—and by extension, Apple consumers—as distinct from the social identity associated with PCs and PC consumers.[4] By associating Apple with a desirable social identity, and evoking an outgroup social identity in presenting PCs, Apple hopes to entice consumers to abandon PCs and adopt Apple computers (Berger and Heath, 2008). In other words, they hope to establish a positive attitude toward Apple through a social identity pathway.

How strong are the associations that become linked to a brand? Recent research has demonstrated that these associations can even impact consumers outside of conscious awareness. Fitzsimons, Chartrand, and Fitzsimons (2008) found that mere exposure to a brand can automatically shape behavior: participants exposed to the Apple brand performed significantly higher on a standard measure of creativity than those exposed to the IBM brand. However, this held only for those participants who reported a preexisting goal to "be creative." Similarly, participants primed with the Disney Channel brand responded more honestly than those primed with E! Channel logos. Thus, just as consumer attitudes toward brands can be influenced via their social identities, consumers with social identities associated with a brand might be influenced by that brand, even outside of conscious awareness (Fitzsimons et al. 2008). As a cautionary note, such studies speak more to the

Figure 7.3 **The Brand-Specific Case of Repositioning**



validity of the psychological processes themselves than to their actual impact when other information and sources of influence are present.

As we suggested earlier, from an RS and FS perspective in MPAA, it may be risky for managers to position new brands linked to transient social identities that are not a natural basis for self-definition. Creating an identity with clear and coherent associations that consumers will identify with and internalize presents a substantial hurdle. Consumers may find the identity poorly defined or not truly theirs, decreasing the likelihood that their attitude toward the social identity will be retrieved and subsequently used.

Repositioning Existing Brands

Consumers and brands are not static. Rather, the needs of consumers and the meaning and perception of brands are in a state of flux. Given the changing demands and opportunities of the marketplace, brand managers may reposition brands to adapt and compete (Aaker 1996). Our proposed social identity pathway to brand evaluation also has implications for managers wishing to reposition existing brands across the product life cycle. Figure 7.3 is a brand-specific modification of Figures 7.1 and 7.2 that graphically depicts the stepwise logic at play here for repositioning an existing brand.

One way in which brand managers might reposition a brand is to reach a new social identity–oriented segment of consumers. In this scenario, a positive association may exist between the brand and a particular social identity (SI → BRAND; Figure 7.3, left panel), but consumers may see that social identity as negative (C → SI; Figure 7.3, left panel). For example, in recent years, Coca-Cola experienced difficulty in reaching male consumers with Diet Coke. Though men were becoming more health conscious, and latent demand existed for a low-calorie alternative to sugary regular Coca-Cola, many men held negative attitudes toward Diet Coke. Diet Coke was strongly associated with women (link 2 in Figure 7.3, left panel), a social identity from which men wished to differentiate (link 1 in Figure 7.3, left panel). Hence, Coca-Cola faced the challenge of attempting to foster a more positive attitude between consumers and the identity associated with their diet soft drink (i.e., change the C → SI link in the left panel, Figure 7.3 from negative to positive). Such a strategy can prove exceedingly difficult, as consumers may be predisposed against adopting the identity (e.g., men may be reluctant to be associated with any reduced-calorie soft drink offerings, despite their health concerns). Brand managers may be better served by changing the elements of the brand that are most associated with the prior social identity, thus addressing both the brand-identity connection and the consumer-identity connection (i.e., changing the C → SI and the SI → BRAND links in Figure 7.3).

Similarly, another scenario may involve targeting the same social identity–oriented segment of consumers, but changing the brand itself (Figure 7.3, right panel). Again, altering symbolic aspects of the brand may be essential to fostering a positive evaluative connection between the identity and the brand (i.e., changing the SI → BRAND link in the right panel of Figure 7.3 from negative to positive). As an illustration, in the study involving hypertension patients, a strongly positive athlete identity (link 1 in Figure 7.3, right panel) was incompatible with hypertension medication compliance (link 2 in Figure 7.3, right panel), so patients adopted a negative attitude toward compliance (Finnel et al. 2008). An appropriate intervention might describe medication compliance in terms that are more consistent with an athlete identity (e.g., "following this regimen will improve strength and performance over the course of one's life," "like athletes, one must take appropriate measures to prevent illness and injury"). By repositioning the representation of the brand (or behavior) to fit an existing social identity, practitioners can encourage the formation of positive brand attitudes.

The challenge for marketers in repositioning brands is twofold: existing attitudes must be suppressed as new attitudes are made more accessible. In such cases, achieving adequate clarity, coherence, and differentiation from the prior brand positioning may be quite difficult, especially for identity-relevant attitudes that may be deeply held (Oliver 1999). Existing attitudes are likely to interfere with repositioning efforts: if existing brand symbols are associated with negatively viewed group identities or negatively valenced evaluations, then consumers are likely to avoid the brand (Berger and Heath 2008). Moreover, even if existing associations do not directly offset repositioning efforts, they are likely to hamper the establishment of a clear, coherent set of new brand associations. Thus, utilizing altogether different brand imagery may be more likely to facilitate the development of positive social identity–driven brand evaluations.

For example, Oldsmobile attempted to reposition itself as a youthful brand in the 1980s, with the tagline, "It's not your father's Oldsmobile," and was widely perceived to have failed. Presumably, many young consumers had highly accessible brand attitudes associating Oldsmobile with an older outgroup identity, and were reluctant to adopt the brand. Conversely, Toyota has achieved great success in introducing the Scion line of automobiles, targeted to consumers possessing a young, hip, adventurous identity. Similarly, the resolution to Coca-Cola's dilemma was the introduction of Coke Zero, a calorie-free soft drink differentiated from Diet Coke in name, taste, packaging, and media campaign. Thus, by changing both C → SI and SI → BRAND links at once and managing the symbolic aspects of the transition, Coca-Cola was able to successfully reposition a diet offering as distinct from existing associations.

A crucial goal for marketers is to make the association between the consumer and the created social identity highly accessible. Marketers can employ elements of the marketing mix (e.g., media campaigns) in order to persuade consumers that they possess qualities that match the social identity associated with the brand (e.g., Escalas and Bettman 2003). However, they face an additional challenge: consumers must feel a sense of personal ownership over an attitude (in accordance with RS; see Cohen and Reed 2006a). Thus, marketers must strive to create an identity that resonates with consumers as authentically their own. One way of fostering this sense of ownership might be to associate spokespeople or exemplars who are admired by consumers possessing the created social identity. For instance, our research has revealed the power of social identity–based attitudes when targeted marketing messages are delivered by spokespeople who resonate culturally with consumers. A study by Puntoni and Reed (2008) explored the differential reactions to spokespeople of either Dutch or Chinese descent for first-generation participants (those raised in China, but who had moved to the Netherlands) versus second-generation participants (those born in China, but who had been raised in the Netherlands) after exposure to subtle identity primes that activated either cultural dimension of their social identity. Compared to first-generation participants, second-generation participants should possess two well-developed cultural identities to draw upon (a self-identity rooted in both ethnic-Chinese and mainstream-Dutch culture). One study showed that compared to a control condition, for participants primed with either an ethnic versus mainstream cultural cue, spokespersons are liked more (less) by second-generation participants when the spokesperson's ethnicity corresponds (does not correspond) to the participant's ethnicity. Additionally, the spokesperson liking effect was found to be mediated by a heightened sense of psychological connection (i.e., perceived similarity and identification) that is triggered by the presence of cues that prime ethnicity versus mainstream culture (Puntoni and Reed 2008, study 2). Furthermore, these differences in reactions are more likely to emerge for second-generation participants whose ethnic identity has evolved through a deeper involvement (more contact and consideration) and internalization with their senses of self.

While it is certainly true that consumers bring a variety of social identities with them into consumer contexts, social identities themselves are also shaped by a lifetime of experience, social interaction, cultural influences, and self-expression (Belk 1988; Escalas and Bettman 2003; Fournier 1998; Richins 1994). This logic suggests the possibility that the content of one's social identity may itself shift in response to contextual cues and triggers, thereby fundamentally altering the direction of subsequent identity-driven effects. For example, marketers often try to appeal to consumers by presenting an image of youth via the choice of content and imagery used in ads that promote their product. When viewing such an advertisement featuring young, virile actors, some consumers may feel kinship with those actors and feel more youthful as a result. Alternatively, many consumers may not identify with the actors, instead classifying them as clear "others," which could weaken their own sense of youth. In this situation, the advertising cues not only activate one's identity, as past research has documented, but they may also fundamentally shift the content associated with the activated identity. Therefore, the cues may alter the nature of subsequent identity-based effects (i.e., brand cues may change the C → SI connection). A study by Forehand, Perkins, and Reed (2008) provides evidence of this phenomenon. They found that consumer self-youth associations assimilated toward age-based imagery when the discrepancy between the self and the imagery was moderate, but contrasted with the imagery when the discrepancy was extreme. However, these effects occurred only when consumers engaged in explicit comparison with the depicted user imagery. Moreover, the effects of automatic self-other categorization were further tested by directing consumers to evaluate either their similarities or dissimilarities with the user imagery. The effects of extremely discrepant user imagery were eliminated when consumers engaged in similarity assessment, and the effects of moderately discrepant user imagery were eliminated when consumers engaged in dissimilarity assessment (Forehand et al. 2008, study 2). To attest to the power of these shifts on actual marketing responses of interest, a third experiment found that self-youth association activation mediated the relationship between youth cues in advertising and positive response to the advertised products.

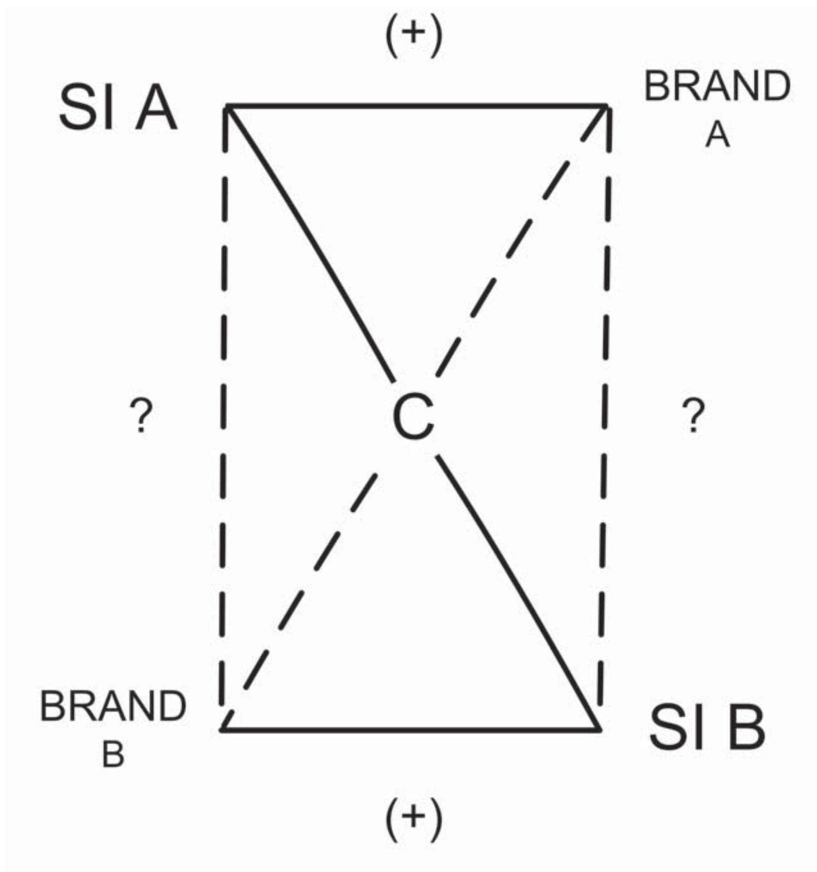
The Special Case of Co-Branding Alliances

To position brands around a social identity, marketers must utilize elements of the marketing mix to appeal to consumers who believe that they possess the social identity, utilize actors or endorsers who are clear and unambiguous exemplars of that social identity, or develop other techniques that can foster a psychological connection between a social identity and the brand. As the BRAND → SI link becomes stronger, the brand itself can become a powerful retrieval cue that triggers the associations that have been built up over time. These associations embodying a particular social identity also represent at least part of the brand's inherent equity, and may be the basis for target marketing as either explicit or implicit cues.

Many of these considerations also apply to co-branding (i.e., the case of brand alliances), and should be a fruitful future substantive domain in which to apply the aforementioned conceptual analyses. For example, it is well established that the success of such brand alliances depends on the perceived "fit" between the two brands (e.g., Simonin and Ruth 1998). For instance, while Intel and Dell are a natural fit, co-branding between Haagen Dazs and SlimFast would be ill-advised. Thus, the idea of fit between brands is often conceptualized as complementarity between product attributes (Samu, Krishnan, and Smith 1999; Venkatesh and Mahajan 1997). However, if brands are identity–relevant, then the picture is somewhat more complicated. Figure 7.4 is a graphic illustration.

Given our proposed balance theory approach to social identity–based brand attitudes, managers must consider not only the fit between the two brands, but also the link between each brand's consumer base and the social identity associated with its partner brand (i.e., given two allied brands A and B, $C_A \rightarrow SI_B$ and $C_B \rightarrow SI_A$ must be considered), and the link between the social identity associated with each brand and its partner brand (i.e., ($SI_A \rightarrow BRAND_B$ and $SI_B \rightarrow BRAND_A$). Recent research provides preliminary empirical evidence for this account (Verrochi and Reed 2008). Specifically, participants viewed ad-

Figure 7.4 **The Special Case of Co-branding**



vertisements for the Nike + iPod brand alliance, and were primed in order to activate their athlete, student, or fashionista social identities. Participants whose fashionable identities were activated reported more favorable attitudes toward the brand alliance than those in the other two conditions. Thus, if consumers hold an identity that is incongruent with one of the parent brands, brand attitudes toward the overall alliance will be less positive (Verrochi and Reed 2008, study 1a). In a second study, participants were primed to activate either their runner or fashionista identities, and evaluated brand alliances containing shoe brands that were perceived as either more functional (Mizuno and New Balance) or more fashionable (Adidas and Nike). Results indicated that participants whose runner identities were activated perceived the alliance with functional shoes to be a better fit, while participants whose fashionista identities were activated perceived the alliance with fashionable shoes to be a better fit. These results suggest that attitudes toward brand alliances are driven by consumer social identities, and provide evidence for the importance of taking social identity into account (Verrochi and Reed 2008, study 1b). Thus, marketing managers must be careful to consider consumers and the social identities that they hold as well as brands when evaluating co-branding alliances: perceived complementarity between parent brands and resulting brand attitudes can rely on the activated identities of consumers.

CONCLUSIONS

At any given point in time, consumers have a subset of social identities that they may adopt in order to guide their thoughts and actions. Marketing practitioners certainly understand the value of targeting consumers, segmenting markets, and positioning products based on the evaluative implications of these social identities. From an applied standpoint, if the brand comes to represent the consumer's social identity, such that the brand is connected to deeply engulfing, self-defining aspects of the consumer (Oliver 1999), then the consumer would say that the brand is "part of me" (cf. Kleine, Kleine and Allen 1995). In other words, the brand can become an extension of the self (Belk 1988), such that the consumer cannot conceive of him or herself as whole without it (cf. Oliver 1999). Arguably, the goal of successfully executing such a social identity–oriented marketing strategy can be more effectively met if marketing strategists have a framework that elucidates the key mechanisms of social identity–driven processing and their marketing implications. It is our hope that the analysis presented here is a useful framework that will help serve that purpose.

NOTES

1. Identity-based marketing is not just the repackaging of psychographic segmentation techniques. Psychographic segmentation is based on the assumption of a single self-concept. It assumes that consumers' stable personality traits can be identified and linked to particular broad lifestyle orientations that can then be classified into broad product categories. However, researchers and practitioners are beginning to realize that such approaches are too simplistic because consumers have many selves that cannot be collapsed into just one broad lifestyle category bucket. Identity-based marketing explicitly recognizes this by more fully taking into account the complexity of consumers' self-concepts (Reed and Bolton 2005).

2. This logic is based on principles of balance theory first proposed by Heider (1958) and elaborated on by others (Abelson 1959; Newcomb 1968).

3. At this point, it may be important to point out important similarities and differences in the strength of the connection between a person and a social identity with related constructs such as chronic accessibility (see Higgins 1996; Higgins and Brendl 1995). Higgins and colleagues (see for example Higgins 1989) think of accessibility as a very broad memorial concept critical to understanding basic processes of knowledge activation (Higgins, Rholes, and Jones 1977). For example, Higgins and colleagues apply this construct to all stored knowledge and define it as the "pre-stimulus preparedness for activation" or the "activation potential" of the stored knowledge (Higgins 1996). Second, and more importantly, Higgins and his colleagues conceptualize and operationalize chronic accessibility in a way that intentionally makes no assumption as to the extent to which that stored knowledge is self-defining. Hence, chronic accessibility is a very broad theoretical construct that is useful in explaining the influence of activated knowledge structures in people's heads—but these concepts in their heads need not be a part of who they are.

4. Interestingly, in late 2008, Microsoft began a campaign to counter this series of advertisements by Apple. The thrust of Microsoft's response is to try to convey the negativity associated with stereotyping a particular group. This was done by showing a range of PC enthusiasts from a myriad different

backgrounds, ethnicities, and so on. In this way, Microsoft is trying to undermine the social identity–based associations on which Apple is trying to capitalize.

REFERENCES

Aaker, David (1996). *Building Strong Brands.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Aaker, Jennifer (1997). "Dimensions of Brand Personality," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 34 (August), 347–357.

Abelson, Robert P. (1959). "Modes of Resolution of Belief Dilemmas," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 3 (4), 343–352.

Ajzen, Icek, and Martin Fishbein (2005). "The Influence of Attitudes on Behavior." In *The Handbook of Attitudes,* ed. Dolores Albarracin, Blair T. Johnson, and Mark P. Zanna. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 173–221.

Ajzen, Icek, and Thomas J. Madden (1986). "Prediction of Goal-Directed Behavior: Attitudes, Intentions, and Perceived Behavioral Control," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 22 (5), 453–474.

Aquino, Karl, and Americus Reed II (2002). "The Self-Importance of Moral Identity," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 83 (6), 1423–1440.

Aquino, Karl, Americus Reed II, Stefan Thau, and Dan Freeman (2007). "A Grotesque and Dark Beauty: How Moral Identity and Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement Influence Cognitive and Emotional Reactions to War," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 43 (3), 385–392.

Bandura, Albert (1982). "Self-Efficacy Mechanism in Human Agency," *American Psychologist,* 37 (2), 122–147.

Belk, Russell W. (1988). "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 15 (3), 139–168.

Belk, Russell W., Kenneth D. Bahn, and Robert N. Mayer (1982). "Developmental Recognition of Consumption Symbolism," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 9 (June), 4–17.

Berger, Jonah, and Chip Heath (2008). "Who Drives Divergence? Identity-Signaling, Out-Group Similarity, and the Abandonment of Cultural Tastes," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 95 (3), 593–607.

Bolton, Lisa E., and Americus Reed II (2004). "Sticky Priors: The Perseverance of Identity Effects on Judgment," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 41 (4), November, 397–410.

Chatman, Celina M., and William von Hippel (2001). "Attributional Mediation of In-Group Bias," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 37 (3), 267–272.

Chen, Serena, and Shelly Chaiken (1999). "The Heuristic-Systematic Model in its Broader Context." In *Dual-Process Theories in Social Psychology,* ed. Shelly Chaiken and Yaacov Trope. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 73–96.

Cialdini, Robert B., Richard J., Borden, Avril Thorne, Marcus R. Walker, Stephen Freeman, and Lloyd R. Sloan (1976). "Basking in Reflected Glory: Three (Football) Field Studies," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 34, 366–375.

Cohen, Joel B., Julia Belyavsky, and Tim Silk (2008). "Using Visualization to Alter the Balance Between Desirability and Feasibility During Choice." Working paper.

Cohen, Joel B., and Americus Reed II (2006a). "A Multiple Pathway Anchoring and Adjustment (MPAA) Model of Attitude Generation and Recruitment," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 33 (1), 1–15.

Cohen, Joel B., and Americus Reed II (2006b). "Perspectives on Parsimony: How Long Is the Coast of England? A Reply to Park and MacInnis; Schwarz; Petty; and Lynch," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 33 (1), 28–30.

Deaux, Kay (1996). "Social Identification." In *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles,* ed. E.T. Higgins and A.W. Kruglanski. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 777–798.

Deshpandé, Rohit, Wayne D. Hoyer, and Naveen Donthu (1986). "The Intensity of Ethnic Affiliation: A Study of the Sociology of Hispanic Consumption," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 13 (2), 214–220.

Deshpandé, Rohit, and Douglas M. Stayman (1994). "A Tale of Two Cities: Distinctiveness Theory and Advertising Effectiveness," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 31 (1), 57–64.

Dovidio, John F., Kerry Kawakama, Craig Johnson, Brenda Johnson, and Adaiah Howard (1997). "On the Nature of Prejudice: Automatic and Controlled Processes," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 33 (5), 510–540.

Dunton, Bridget C., and Russell H. Fazio (1997). "Categorization by Race; the Impact of Automatic and Controlled Components of Racial Prejudice," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 33 (5), 451–470.

Escalas, Jennifer Edson, and James R. Bettman (2003). "You Are What They Eat: The Influence of Reference Groups on Consumers' Connections to Brands," *Journal of Consumer Psychology,* 13 (3), 339–348.

Fabrigar, Leandre R., Tara K. MacDonald, and Duane T. Wegener (2005). "The Structure of Attitudes." In *The Handbook of Attitudes,* ed. Dolores Albarracin, Blair T. Johnson, and Mark P. Zanna. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 79–125.

Fabrigar, Leandre R., Richard E. Petty, Stephen M. Smith, and Stephen L. Crites Jr. (2006). "Understanding Knowledge Effects on Attitude-Behavior Consistency: The Role of Relevance, Complexity, and Amount of Knowledge," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 90 (4), 556–577.

Fazio, Russell H., and Tamara Towles-Schwen (1999). "The MODE Model of Attitude-Behavior Processes." In *Dual-Process Theories in Social Psychology,* ed. Shelly Chaiken and Yaacov Trope. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 97–116.

Feldman, Jack M., and John G. Lynch Jr. (1988). "Self-Generated Validity and Other Effects of Measurement on Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior," *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 72 (3), 42–35.

Finnel, Stephanie, Americus Reed II, Karl Aquino, and Stefan Thau (2008). "Marketing War: The Case of Dueling Identities." Under review.

Finnel, Stephanie, Americus Reed II, Kevin Volpp, and Katrina Armstrong (2008). "The Joint Influence of Past, Present and Future Selves on Hypertension Medication Compliance." Under review.

Fishbein, Martin, and Icek Ajzen (1975). *Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Fitzsimons, Grainne M., Tanya L. Chartrand, and Gavan J. Fitzsimons (2008). "Automatic Effects of Brand Exposure on Motivated Behavior: How Apple Makes You 'Think Different,'" *Journal of Consumer Research,* 35 (June), 21–35.

Forehand, Mark R., Rohit Deshpandé (2001). "What We See Makes Us Who We Are: Priming Ethnic Self-Awareness and Advertising Response," *Journal of Marketing Research,* 38 (3), 336–348.

Forehand, Mark R., and Rohit Deshpandé, and Americus Reed II (2002). "Identity Salience and the Influence of Differential Activation of the Social Self-schema on Advertising Response," *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 87(6) 1086–1099.

Forehand, Mark R., Andrew Perkins, and Americus Reed II (2008). "The Shaping of Social Identity: Assimilation/Contrast Responses to Ad Exposure." Under review.

Fournier, Susan (1998). "Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 24 (4), 343–373.

French, John R.P. Jr., and Bertram H. Raven (1959). "The Bases of Social Power." In *Studies in Social Power,* ed. D. Cartwright. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research, 150–167.

Heider, Fritz (1958). *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations.* New York, NY: Wiley.

Higgins, E. Tory (1989). "Knowledge Accessibility and Activation: Subjectivity and Suffering from Unconscious Sources." In *Unintended Thought,* ed. J.S. Uleman and J.A. Bargh. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 75–123.

——— (1996). "Knowledge Activation: Accessibility, Applicability and Salience." In *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles,* ed. E.T. Higgins and A.W. Kruglanski. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 133–168.

Higgins, E. Tony, and Miguel Brendl (1995). "Accessibility and Applicability: Some 'Activation Rules' Influencing Judgment," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 31, 218–243.

Higgins, E. Tony, Israela Loeb, and Marlene Moretti (1995). "Self-Discrepancies and Developmental Shifts in Vulnerability: Life Transitions in the Regulatory Significance of Others." In *Emotion, Cognition, and Representation: Rochester Symposium on Developmental Psychology 6,* ed. D. Cicchetti and S.L. Toth. Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 191–230.

Higgins, E. Tony, W.S. Rholes, and C.R. Jones (1977). "Category Accessibility and Impression Formation," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 13, 141–154.

Hong, Ying-yi, Michael W. Morris, Chi-yue Chiu, and Veronica Benet-Martínez (2000). "Multicultural Minds: A Dynamic Constructivist Approach to Culture and Cognition," *American Psychologist,* 55 (7), 709–720.

Jones, E.E., and K.E. Davis (1965). "From Acts to Dispositions: The Attribution Process in Person Perception." In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology,* ed. L. Berkowitz. New York, NY: Academic Press, 219–266.

Katz, Daniel (1960). "The Functional Approach to the Study of Attitudes," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 24(2), 163–204.

Keller, Kevin L. (1993). "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity," *Journal of Marketing,* 57 (1), 1–22.

——— (2003). "Brand Synthesis: The Multidimensionality of Brand Knowledge," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 29 (March), 595–600.

Kelley, Harold H. and John L. Michela (1980). "Attribution Theory and Research," *Annual Review of Psychology,* 31, 457–501.

Kelman, Herbert C. (1958). "Compliance, Identification, and Internalization: Three Processes of Attitude Change," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 2, 51–60.

——— (1961). "Processes of Opinion Change," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 25, 57–78.

——— (2006). "Interests, Relationships, Identities: Three Central Issues for Individuals and Groups in Negotiating their Social Environment," *Annual Review of Psychology,* 57, 1–26.

Kleine, Robert E. III, Susan Schultz Kleine, and Jerome B. Kernan (1993). "Mundane Consumption and the Self: A Social Identity Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Psychology,* 2 (3), 209–235.

Kleine, Susan Schultz, Robert E. Kleine III, and Chris T. Allen (1995). "How Is a Possession 'Me' or 'Not Me'? Characterizing Types and an Antecedent of Material Possession Attachment," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 3 (December), 327–343.

Laverie, Debra A., Robert E. Kleine III, and Susan Schultz Kleine (2002). "Reexamination and Extension of Kleine, Kliene, and Kernan's Social Identity Model of Mundane Consumption: The Mediating Role of the Appraisal Process," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 28 (4), 659–669.

Levy, Sidney J. (1959). "Symbols for Sale," *Harvard Business Review,* 37(4), 117–124.

Lewin, Kurt (1951). *Field Theory in Social Science.* New York, NY: Harper.

Loken, Barbara (2006). "Consumer Psychology: Categorization, Inferences, Affect, and Persuasion," *Annual Review of Psychology,* 57, 453–485.

Loken, Barbara, Christopher Joiner, and Joann Peck (2002). "Category Attitude Measures: Exemplars as Inputs," *Journal of Consumer Psychology,* 12 (2), 149–161.

Lynch, John G. (2006), "Accessibility-Diagnosticity and the Multiple Pathway Anchoring and Adjustment Model," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 33 (1), 25–27.

Markus, Hazel, and Paula Nurius (1987). "Possible Selves: The Interface Between Motivation and the Self-Concept." In *Self and Identity: Psychosocial Perspectives,* ed. Krysia Yardley and Terry Honess. New York, NY: Wiley, 157–172.

Marques, Jose M., Vincent Y. Yzerbyt, and John B. Rijsman (1988). "Context Effects of Intergroup Discrimination: In-Group Bias as a Function of Experimenter's Provenance," *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 27, 301–318.

McGarty, Craig, S. Alexander Haslam, Karen J. Hutchinson, and John C. Turner (1994). "The Effects of Salient Group Memberships on Persuasion," *Small Group Research,* 25 (2), 267–293.

McGuire, William J., Claire V. McGuire, and Ward Winton (1979). "Effects of Household Sex Composition on the Salience of One's Gender in the Spontaneous Self-Concept," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 15, 77–90.

Meyvis, Tom, and Chris Janiszewski (2004). "When Are Broader Brands Stronger Brands? An Accessibility Perspective on the Success of Brand Extensions," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 31 (September), 346–357.

Muniz, Albert M. Jr., and Thomas C. O'Guinn (2001). "Brand Community," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 27 (March), 412–432.

Newcomb, Theodore M. (1968). "Interpersonal Balance." In *Theories of Cognitive Consistency: A Sourcebook,* ed. R.P. Abelson, E. Aronson, W.J. McGuire, T.M. Newcomb, M.J. Rosenberg, P.H. Tannenbaum. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally, 28–51.

Newman, Leonard S., Kimberly Duff, Nicole Schnopp-Wyatt, Bradley Brock, and Yonit Hoffman (1997). "Reactions to the O.J. Simpson Verdict: 'Mindless Tribalism' or Motivated Inference Processes," *Journal of Social Issues,* 53 (Special Issue), 547–562.

Oliver, Richard L. (1999). "Whence Consumer Loyalty?" *Journal of Marketing,* 63 (Special Issue), 33–44.

Petrocelli, John V., Zakary L. Tormala, and Derek D. Rucker (2007). "Unpacking Attitude Certainty: Attitude Clarity and Attitude Correctness," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 92 (1), 30–41.

Petty, Richard E. (2006). "A Metacognitive Model of Attitudes," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 33 (1), 22–24.

Petty, Richard E. Pablo Brinol, Zakary L. Tormala, and Duane T. Wegener (2007). "The Role of Metacognition in Social Judgment." In *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles* (2nd ed.), ed. E.T. Higgins and A.W. Kruglanski. New York, NY: Guilford Press, 254–284.

Pilkington, Neil W., and John E. Lydon (1997). "The Relative Effect of Attitude Similarity and Attitude Dissimilarity on Interpersonal Attraction: Investigating the Moderating Roles of Prejudice and Group Membership," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 23 (2), 107–122.

Puntoni, Stefano, and Americus Reed II (2008). "Generational Influences on Reaction to Ethnic Cues in Advertising." Working paper.

Reed II, Americus (2004). "Activating the Self-Importance of Consumer Selves: Exploring Identity Salience Effects on Judgments," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 31 (2), 286–295.

Reed II, Amencus, and Lisa E. Bolton (2005). "The Complexity of Identity," *Sloan Management Review,* 46 (3), 17–22.

Reed II, Amencus, and Joel B. Cohen (2009). "Chatroom Study." Working paper.

Reed II, Amencus, and Mark. R. Forehand (2008). "Managing Social Identity: Strategies for Creating Brand Identification and Community." Working paper.

Richins, Marsha L. (1994). "Valuing Things: The Public and Private Meanings of Possessions," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 21 (3), 504–521.

Samu, Sridhar, Shanker H. Krishnan, and Robert E. Smith (1999). "Using Advertising Alliances for New Product Introduction: Interactions Between Product Complementarity and Promotional Strategies," *Journal of Marketing,* 63 (1), 57–74.

Schouten, John W., and James H. McAlexander (1995). "Subcultures of Consumption: An Ethnography of New Bikers," *Journal of Consumer Research,* 22 (June), 43–61.

Sedikides, Constantine, and Michael J. Strube (1997). "Self-Evaluation: To Thine Own Self Be Good, to Thine Own Self Be Sure, to Thine Own Self Be True, and to Thine Own Self Be Better," In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology,* 29, ed. M. P. Zanna. New York, NY: Academic Press, 209–269.

Shavitt, Sharon (1990). "The Role of Attitude Objects in Attitude Functions," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 26(2), 124–148.

Shih, Margaret, Todd L. Pittinsky, and Nalini Ambady (1999). "Stereotype Susceptibility: Identity Salience and Shifts in Quantitative Performance," *Psychological Science,* 10 (1), 80–83.

Simonin, Bernard L., and Julie A. Ruth (1998). “Is a Company Known by the Company It Keeps? Assessing the Spillover Effects of Brand Alliances on Consumer Brand Attitudes,” *Journal of Marketing Research*” 35 (1), 30–42.

Sirgy, M. Joseph (1982). “Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review,” *Journal of Consumer Research,* 9, 287–300.

Smith, Eliot R., and Diane M. Mackie (1995). *Social Psychology.* New York, NY: Worth Publishers.

Smith, M. Brewster, Jerome S. Bruner, and Robert W. White (1956). *Opinions and Personality.* New York, NY: Wiley.

Stayman, Douglas M., and Rohit Deshpandé (1989). “Situational Ethnicity and Consumer Behavior,” *Journal of Consumer Research,* 16 (December), 361–371.

Tajfel, Henri (1959). “Quantitative Judgment in Social Perception,” *British Journal of Psychology,* 50, 16–59.

Tajfel, Henri, and John C. Turner (1979). “An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict.” In *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations,* ed. W.G. Austin and S. Worchel. Monterey, CA: Brooks-Cole, 33–47.

Terry, Deborah J., and Michael A. Hogg (1996). “Group Norms and the Attitude Behavior Relationship: A Role for Group Identification,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 22, 776–793.

Tormala, Zakary L., and Derek D. Rucker (2007). “Attitude Certainty: A Review of Past Findings and Emerging Perspectives,” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass,* 1 (November), 469–492.

Turner, John C., and Penelope J. Oakes (1986). “The Significance of the Social Identity Concept for Social Psychology with Reference to Individualism, Interactionism, and Social Influence,” *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 25, 237–252.

Venkatesh, R., and Vijay Mahajan (1997). “Products with Branded Components: An Approach for Premium Pricing and Partner Selection,” *Marketing Science,* 16 (2), 146–165.

Verrochi, Nicole M., and Americus Reed II (2008). “Brand Alliances: When Do Consumers (Not) Fit?” Working paper.

Visser, Penny S., and Robert R. Mirabile (2004). “Attitudes in the Social Context: The Impact of Social Network Composition on Individual-Level Attitude Strength,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 87 (6), 779–795.

Wegener, Duane T., and Richard E. Petty (1997). “The Flexible Correction Model: The Role of Naïve Theories of Bias in Bias Correction.” In *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology,* ed. Mark P. Zanna. San Diego, CA: Academic Press, 141–208.

Wilder, David A., and Peter N. Shapiro (1984). “Role of Out-Group Cues in Determining Social Identity,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 47, 342–348.

Wilkie, William (2005). “Needed: A Larger View of Marketing and Scholarship,” *Journal of Marketing,* 69, 4 (October), pp. 8–10.

Ybarra, Oscar, and David Trafimow (1998). “How Priming the Private Self or Collective Self Affects the Relative Weights of Attitudes and Subjective Norms,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 24 (4), 362–370.