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Essays on Multiple Identities and Motivated Consumption:
Exploring the Role of Identity Centrality on Self-Brand Connections

by

Tracy R. Harmon

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Marketing
College of Business Administration
University of South Florida

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of Joyce A. Harmon.

She was my greatest teacher, and ultimately the love of my life.

I carry her memory in my spirit and her strength in my heart.

Without her I would have never known how to complete this monumental task.

Without her, I would have allowed my own understanding to lead me astray.

Without her, I would not have known how to fight for what is right within my soul.

Without her, I would have never learned how to balance emotion and ambition.

Without her, I would have taken this crown and let it characterize me, but her teachings
have kept me grounded and true.

Mommy, this is for you with love.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation consists of three essays on the role of identity centrality in the formation of consumer self-brand connections. It contributes to a better understanding of how consumers negotiate multiple identities in the marketplace when making brand choices. This is significant as much of the research on the self-concept and consumer behavior has focused on isolated self-dimensions or have examined single consumer identities in isolation. Theoretically grounded in identity process theory (Breakwell 1986), which suggests individuals construct their identity through multiple identity motives influencing identity centrality, enactment, and affect; this dissertation addresses these gaps by answering two specific questions: 1) What are the various identity motives that influence a consumer's individual and group identity centrality leading to enhanced self-brand connections? 2) How does identity centrality influence reference group brand associations in the formation of self-brand connections?

In Essay 1, a framework for conceptualizing the influence of multiple identity motives on self-brand connections is proposed driven by findings from consumer in-depth interviews. The framework suggests identity centrality mediates the relationship between the satisfaction of multiple identity motives on self-brand connections, and moderates self-brand connections when reference group brand associations are

considered. Fourteen propositions are presented, and are empirically tested in Essays 2 and 3.

In Essay 2, identity motives from identity process theory along with others identified in Essay 1 are empirically validated, using both hierarchical linear modeling and hierarchical multiple regression. The findings support the influence of two identity motives informing identity centrality, namely: *recognition and continuity*. This is significant, as prior research in consumer behavior has largely focused on the self-esteem and self-consistency motives (Grub and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982).

Essay 3 investigates the moderating effect of identity centrality on the formation of self-brand connections as reference group brand associations are considered. It is found that when the ingroup identity is highly central, stronger self-brand connections result. On the contrary, when the ingroup identity is low in centrality self-brand connections are mitigated. The differential effects of self-brand connections due to identity centrality provide insight into intra-group differences when the brand is consistent with the ingroup image.

The results support a general importance of the role of identity centrality at both the individual and group levels, providing a catalyst for future studies examining the role of the self-concept in consumer behavior.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Marketers have long recognized that meanings are associated with brands, and individuals tend to purchase those products that support and develop their self-image to express who they are (Aaker 1999; Belk 1988; Fournier 1998; Grub and Grathwohl 1967; Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993; Laverie, Kleine, and Kleine 2002). Much of the current work on self-expression has examined self-congruity, the extended self, identity creation, consumers' relationships with brands, consumer brand meaning, and most recently self-brand connections. A limitation of many of these studies pertaining to self-expression is that they have sought to understand the consumer's self-definition by focusing on one identity component or one specific identity. In doing so, researchers have failed to consider a consumer's multiple identities and their impact on brand-related outcomes, such as self-brand connections.

This is relevant, as a central theme in contemporary social psychology is the multiplicity of identity, whereby individuals have multiple roles and group memberships with which they identify and derive meaning (Settles 2004). This means that at any given time an individual can hold multiple identities each with a unique image and level of importance. A recent article in the New York Times mentioned that when Time Warner Cable sells high-priced bundles of television, telephone, and Internet services, "60 percent of the time mothers decided which package to buy. So we are showing the

packages through a mother's lens and on mother's day" (Deutsch 2006, p.5). They do this by crafting advertisements that features a mother in different activities throughout the house (e.g. reading to her children, getting dinner ready for her family). By targeting her mother identity instead of her career woman, homemaker, or wife identities, marketers at AOL are relying on the centrality of her mother identity influencing purchase of their bundled services.

The consumer behavior literature is beginning to recognize the multidimensional nature of the self-concept, moving beyond the established Cartesian view that assumes the "thinking mind" as indivisible and unified (Aaker, Firat, and Schultz 1997; 2001; Huffman, Ratneshwar, and Mick 2000; Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993; Laverie, Kleine, and Kleine 2002; Mandel 2003). Within the multiple selves tradition, consumer selves are studied as multiple self-concepts – actual, ideal, and social (Belch and Landon 1977; Sirgy 1983), situational self (Hogg and Savolainen 1998; Schenk and Holman 1979); malleable self (Aaker 1999), fragmented self (Firat and Shultz 1997, 2001; Firat and Venkatesh 1995; Gould 1991); and role identities (Arnett, German, and Hunt 2003; Kleine et al. 2003; Laverie et al. 2002). These studies, along with others, draw from the dynamic self-concept paradigm in order to understand the relationships between salient identities and consumption congruent with those identities (Aaker 1999; Forehand, Deshpande and Reed 2002; Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993; Laverie, Kleine, Kleine (2002). Although insightful, research on the consumption behaviors of individuals through their multiple selves, has failed to address many pertinent questions, such as: How does identity centrality vary across a consumer's multiple identities in a consumption setting? How do multiple selves interact with each other and give meaning

to brand consumption experiences? Under what conditions will the reference group identity become central to behavioral outcomes when other identities are present?

Such is the motivation behind the current research. Identity centrality, the importance or psychological attachment individuals place on their identities (Settle 2004), can aid in explaining how individuals negotiate multiple identities exacerbating one and buffering others. This is of particular importance to consumer behavior as the presence of multiple identities suggests individuals readily associate with a number of social groups, roles, and categories depending on the needs of the individual or the contextual environment (Crawford 2004). Therefore, various motivations driving identity centrality and symbolic brand choice may coexist. Understanding this link between motivation and behavior is critical to gaining insight into the relationship between identity centrality and self-brand connections.

1.2. Problem Statement

Despite the pervasiveness of the research on self-concept and consumer behavior, the consideration of multiple identities in consumption experiences has been vastly under-realized in the marketing literature. Three short-comings in the discipline's use of the self-concept in marketing can be identified. First, the application of multiple selves (working self theory) has been limited both conceptually and substantively. As mentioned above, most consumer research on self-concept and consumption considers identities in isolation, or limits the domain of identity consideration. The consideration of multiple identities in the formation of self-brand connections has been overlooked; creating a gap in marketers' understanding of the motivations and consequences competing consumer

identities have on consumption related outcomes (i.e. self-brand connections, purchase intentions, attitudes).

A second short-coming of current research of the self-concept and consumption concerns the influence of identity motives. While other researchers have addressed individual motives in consumer behavior (e.g., Escalas and Bettman 2005; Erdem and Swait 2004; Argo, Dahl, Manchanda 2005) their relevance to identity centrality has either been omitted or weakly linked. In order to address these shortcomings, alternative identity motives beyond what has been proposed in prior models of how the self-concept influences consumer behavior (Sirgy 1982; Grub and Grathwohl 1967; Levy 1959; Belk 1988; Kleine et al. 1993) should be considered. This is relevant as there is neither a conceptualization nor empirical findings that address the simultaneous influence of multiple identity motives on brand choice and related behavioral outcomes. Meanwhile, research dedicated to brand choice has independently examined reference group influence (Escalas and Bettman 2005), self efficacy (Erdem and Swait 2004); self-meaning (Fournier 1998); and self-presentation (Argo, Dahl, Manchanda 2005). Taken together these studies suggest multiple motives influence the same outcome (i.e. brand choice). While Vignoles et al. (2002; 2006) has examined the influence of multiple motives on the identity construction of Anglican priests, the study of multiple motives on brand directed behavior has yet to be investigated.

The third and final shortcoming concerns the centrality (e.g. psychological importance) of consumer identities. Although previous research has examined identity salience and associated cognitions and behaviors, identity centrality has been virtually ignored. Identity centrality may be an important consideration in the formation of

consumer attitudes behavior. For instance prior research in consumer behavior has shown that reference groups influence self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005); serve as extensions of the self (Belk 1988); and activate self goals when others are perceived (Kenrick, Maner, and Butler 2002). However, these studies have failed to consider the centrality of those reference group identities; leading to questions surrounding the differential attitudes and cognitions within the group. This is supported by the social psychology literature which suggests individuals assign a level of significance to their identities, such that this level of significance directly impacts group driven attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions.

1.3. Research Purpose and Importance

The need to expand our knowledge of the self-brand phenomena beyond current findings is the motivation for this research, offering identity centrality as a meaningful construct for analysis. While it appears that the idea of “identity centrality” is both applicable and acceptable there has been virtually no study of the relationship per se. Also, there exists no integrative theoretical account of brand-identity centrality phenomenon. Thus, great untapped potential lies in applying identity centrality to the study of self-brand connections. Based on this, the purpose of this research is to examine the influence of multiple motives on identity centrality shaping the formation of self-brand connections. This involves considering the range of motives that drive an individual’s construction and maintenance of a positive and consistent self-image.

The present research has implications for brand managers with regard to positioning strategies. They can improve the effectiveness of their brand by positioning it on the multiple motives that engender a central identity for the consumer. This is

supported by Graeff (1996) who argues that brand managers can manage the effects of image congruence such that consumers should have a favorable attitude and purchase intention towards brands that are perceived to be similar to their desired self-image. This research will also provide insight as to how consumers manage multiple identities in the marketplace and how the centrality of a particular identity influences a consumer's self-brand connection. This is relevant to marketers as effective marketing strategies that address the influence of multiple identity motives will likely lead to stronger self-brand connections, when a central identity is evoked.

1.4. Theoretical Perspective

This dissertation employs Identity Process Theory (Breakwell 1983; 1986) to understand how multiple identity motives lead to a consumer's central identity affecting brand choice. Identity Process Theory asserts there is an interaction of multiple identity motives relevant to both individual and group identity processes. These processes lead to identity construction through cognitive, behavioral and affective processes. This theoretical perspective is relied upon to conceptualize the relationship between identity motives, identity centrality and self-brand connections. By grounding this research in this theoretical perspective, the researcher is able to gain a deeper understanding of motives driving multiple consumer selves, and related centrality. Other theoretical perspectives such as role theory and social identity theory are used in tandem with Identity Process theory to support the formulation of the research hypotheses.

1.5. Concepts and Definitions

Before proposing a framework to explain the relationship between identity motives and self-brand connections, it is necessary to define the key concepts that will be

presented in the current research. This is particularly important given the multifaceted and inconsistent meanings given to terms such as *self-concept* and *identity* in previous studies.

According to seminal work by James (1890), the *self-concept* is multifaceted and is comprised of the *spiritual self*, which he defines as “the entire stream of our personal consciousness”, (p. 296); *the material self*, all those aspects of material existence in which we feel a strong sense of ownership, our bodies, our families, and our possessions; *the social self*, defined as “the recognition which he (a man) gets from his mates” (p.294); and the *bodily self*, which is defined as the attributes of physical body. This dissertation will focus on the social self because it “houses” the many identities consumers possess and it is appropriate for examining reference group influences in symbolic consumption. This focus is supported by James (1890) who considers the multiplicity of social selves; and states “a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind” (p.294).

There exists many possible selves that comprise the overall self concept (Markus and Kunda 1986), and those possible selves lead to an individual’s identity. Identity theory suggests that the core of an identity is the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance (Thoits 1986). According to Stryker (1980), identity, is an “internalized positional designation” for each position or role relationship they have in society. This means that the overall self is organized into multiple parts, each of which is tied to various aspects of society. This viewpoint is further supported by Markus and Kunda (1986) who suggest that multiple selves are the source of an individual’s identity.

In a similar vein, Stets and Burke (2000) suggest that when individuals self-categorize or identify with a particular role, an identity is formed. In this sense, the relationship between identity and self-concept becomes coupled as the self-concept becomes classified in order to relate to other social categories. For instance, having a social identity means a person has affiliated themselves with a socially categorized group who is similar to their self-concept through a process of social comparison (e.g. African-American, woman, Jewish, Muslim).

The previous definitions of the *self-concept* and *identity* lead to the concept that represents the thrust of this dissertation, *identity motives* which are defined as pressures toward certain identity states and away from others which guide the processes of identity construction and inherently is a function of an individual's overall self-concept (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Gollidge, and Scabini 2006).

It might appear that Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is conceptually the same as identity motives. However, according to James (1890), individuals have three levels of needs: 1) material (physiological, safety), 2) social (belongingness, esteem), and 3) spiritual; which serves as an impetus for Maslow's (1954) hierarchy (Daniels 2001). Maslow's (1954) model demonstrates how the same product can satisfy different needs implying that motivation energizes and directs goal-oriented behavior. In turn, different levels of motives specify benefits marketers should emphasize. However, this study examines social needs due to the social nature of identity construction. Other needs such as spiritual, material and functional needs are all beyond the scope of this dissertation. Given the social demands of self-image congruence, defined as how an individual perceives themselves in relation to others, social needs are fitting for the current research.

Maslow's hierarchy does not capture the full range of identity motives considered in the current study because it only conceptually addresses two proposed identity motives, specifically belongingness and esteem. In addition within Maslow's (1954) hierarchy, the various needs "are like empty tanks to be filled sequentially; only when a more basic category of need is fulfilled do individuals proceed to the next higher-order need category" (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003, p. 100). Maslow's (1954) hierarchy undervalues the true typology of identity motives that will be discussed in this present research. Belk, Ger, and Askegaard (2003) further suggest that needs or "mere wants" oftentimes mask the passion that consumers experience in connection with certain consumption activities.

Alternative motivational conceptualizations challenging Maslow's hierarchical model include consumer's relationships with products and services as extensions of the self (Belk 1988); symbolic consumption (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982); and among others hedonic consumption (Holbrook and Hirschman 1981). These conceptualizations, like identity motives, connect an individual's most intimate feeling and goals with consumption. The conceptualization of identity motives, can be thought as a type of desire, which addresses a more passionate motivation than Maslow's (1954) needs. As such, features of current identities that satisfy a consumer's identity motives may be associated with positive affect and can be accentuated in self-presentation.

Lastly, identity centrality is defined as the importance an individual attaches to a given identity (Settles 2004). In the present study, identity centrality is associated with a single identity. That is not to say that identity centrality cannot be relevant for multiple identities forming a single identity germane to a specific context (e.g. auto-buying

identity, fashion-buying identity). However, in the present study, the centrality of “collective multiple identities” is not explored. Nonetheless, identity centrality requires conscious awareness and is usually measured by asking individuals to rank different identities according to their importance (Rane and McBride 2000). Conceptually, identity centrality is different from identity salience. Salience is the likelihood that a particular identity will be invoked in any given situation in comparison to the likelihood that other identities might be invoked (Rane and McBride 2000; Stryker and Serpe 1994). Salience is not a part of an individual’s consciousness but simply reflects the probability that an identity will be enacted (Rane and McBride 2000) and usually is measured by asking individuals to name the first thing they would tell someone about themselves (e.g., Minton and Pasley 1996; Stryker and Serpe 1994).

1.6. Research Questions

The current research will address two fundamental research questions. First, what are the various identity motives that influence a consumer’s individual and group identity centrality? Self-brand connections? Second, how does identity centrality influence reference group brand associations in the formation of self-brand connections? These research questions will be addressed across three essays. In Essay 1, identity motives driving identity centrality is qualitatively explored to answer the research question, what are the various identity motives that influence a consumer’s individual and group identity centrality (i.e. importance of the ingroup identity)? Essay 2 will empirically test the relationship between the identified identity motives and identity centrality in an automobile context. Lastly, Essay 3 will examine the influence of identity centrality on the relationship between reference group brand associations and related self-brand

connections, and seeks to answer the question, how does identity centrality influence reference group brand associations in the formation of self-brand connections? The format of each essay will offer an introduction, followed by a theoretical framework supporting the research propositions (Essay 1) and hypotheses (Essay 2 and 3). This will be followed by research methodology and a brief discussion of the findings.

1.7. Dissertation Research Agenda

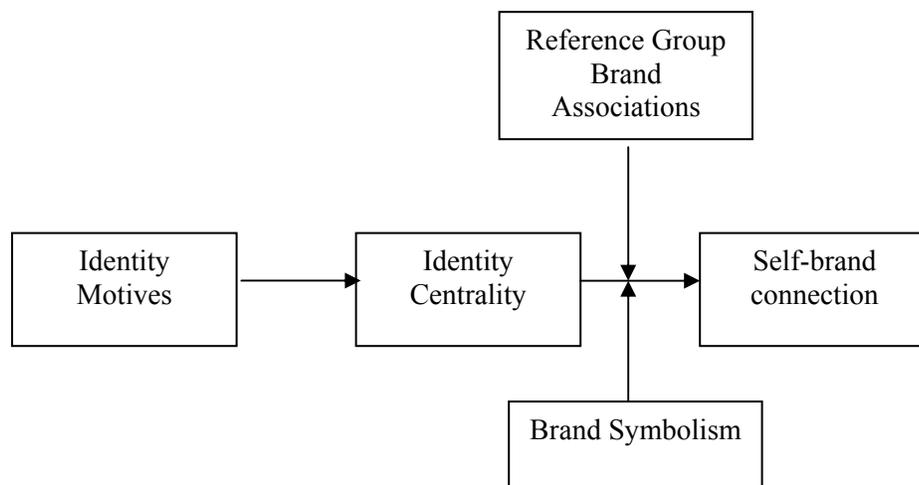
The overall goal of the dissertation is to achieve a better understanding of what it means for a consumer to establish centrality among their various identities. A focus on the managerial utility of using identity centrality to understand consumer self-brand connections is maintained throughout the dissertation. Specifically, the researcher seeks to empirically demonstrate that establishing centrality of identities with a consumer pays off, and to provide insight into how the marketing manager can affect self-brand connections. To achieve these objectives, a multi-method research program has been designed. The intent of the dissertation is to develop a solid conceptual foundation from which identity centrality theory can be cultivated, and to test portions of this theory as a way of demonstrating managerial utility of the construct of identity centrality as a whole.

Before the research agenda can be begin, the legitimacy of considering identity centrality is established. In the next chapter, evidence in support of the identity centrality construct in consumer behavior is presented. The goal of the discussion is to make salient the many motives that are germane to identity centrality so that that reader will understand centrality as something more enduring than identity salience in self-brand connections. In order to generate primary data for these motives, Chapter 3 reveals insights from a qualitative exploration of identity motives and identity centrality in the

domain of self-brand connections. The data support the basic contention that consumers establish centrality of identity with regard to their brands, and yield an understanding of the various motives driving this phenomenon. Identity centrality emerges from the analysis as a key self-brand connection mechanism.

Figure 1.1 presents the framework organizing this dissertation. Identity centrality comprises the core of the model and its role as both a dependent and independent variable is explored. The outcome variable, self-brand connection reflects the primary psychological and behavioral benefits that accrue from the brand's ability to aid in identity construction. In Chapter 4, identity centrality is formally investigated on the individual level. As a final step, group level factors affecting identity centrality levels are considered in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the dissertation by outlining the contributions, limitations, and future research.

Figure 1.1
Identity-Motivated Self-Brand Connection Framework



Collectively, the conceptual and empirical components of the dissertation provide a sound test of the contributory value of identity centrality in the formation of self-brand connections. It is the hope of the author that the insights herein are capable of stimulating future research in the area, and guiding cultivation of a theory of Brand Identity Centrality.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the background literature on the self-concept. The chapter is in four sections. First, a brief introduction to multiple selves is presented and its characterization in the domain of consumer behavior is offered. Second, a theoretical overview of the overall self-concept in social psychology is presented; followed by a review of self-concept studies in marketing. Finally gaps in the marketing self-concept literature are identified, and later explored in this dissertation.

2.2. The Self-Concept

The self-concept is comprised of three interrelated self-domains (Higgins 1987): the *perceived self*, the *ideal self*, and the *actual self*. Each one of these elements plays a central role in how the self concept relates to constructing, organizing, and influencing consumer behavior.

2.2.1. The Perceived Self

William James (1890) saw the self as consisting of whatever the individual views as belonging to himself or herself, which includes a material, a social, and a spiritual self. Perceptions of the material self include those views of one's own body, family, and possessions. The social self includes observation others have of the individual, and the spiritual self includes perceptions of one's emotions and desires. Gecas (1982) asserts that the content of the self-concept is derived from perceptions of social and personal

identities, traits, attributes, and possessions. Traits are considered broad reaction tendencies and express relatively permanent patterns of behavior (Cattell 1965). Individuals demonstrate their values primarily through their behavior and through their speech. This particular element of the perceived self is concerned with the set of values that the individual considers guides his or her decisions and actions.

2.2.1.1. Development of the Perceived Self

Self perceptions are established through interactions with one's environment and feedback; whereby processes of attitude formation, attitude change (Ajzen and Fishbein 1980) and self attribution (Jones 1990) contribute to the development of a set of self perceptions. Feedback concerns the response an individual derives from the behavior and communication, be it verbal or non-verbal of others. When feedback to the target is clear, plentiful and consistent, a set of strongly held self perceptions is formed; whereas ambiguous, lacking, or inconsistent feedback results in weakly held self perceptions (Leonard, Beauvais, and Scholl 1995).

2.2.2. The Ideal Self

The ideal self represents the set of traits, competencies and values an individual desires to possess (Rogers 1959). In this definition, "possess" refers to the aspirations of the individual to believe that he or she actually has a particular trait, competency, or value. The conception of the ideal self is similar to Schlenker's (1985) "idealized image" (i.e. the ultimate person one would like to be). This element of the self-concept is the higher-order goal that most individuals strive for when consuming symbolically.

2.2.2.1. Development of the Ideal Self

As an individual continues to interact with a reference group he or she has received feedback from; the individual will in turn internalize the feedback based on the relevant traits, competencies, and values that are important to the reference group (Leonard, Beauvais, and Scholl 1995). In this regard the individual becomes *inner-directed*, using the internalized elements of the self as measures of their successes or failures. Internalized competencies and values have been suggested as the basis of the ideal self (Higgins, Bond, Klein and Strauman 1987) and as an internal standard for behavior (Bandura 1977). In contrast if the individual receives negative feedback or positive, but conditional feedback the individual may not internalize the feedback or may partially internalize the traits, competencies, and values of the reference group. In other words, this type of individual becomes *other-directed* and will either retreat from the group or require continuous feedback from group members (Leonard et al. 1995).

2.2.3. The Social Self

The social self translates into an individual's social identity. Tajfel and Turner (1985) defined social identification as a process by which individuals classify themselves and others into different social categories such as "woman", "Baptist", and "student". The process of classification serves to order and segment the social environment enabling the individual to locate or define him- or herself within a given social context. Thus social identities are those aspects of an individual's self concept that derive from the social categories to which he or she perceives as belonging to (Tajfel and Turner 1985).

2.2.3.1. Development of Social Identities

Individuals can establish their social identities through involvement with reference groups in social situations. As individuals continue to engage in their particular reference groups, the group becomes the basis for identification. Naturally the success or failure of the reference group as a whole becomes a source of feedback for the individual. When an individual identifies with a socially referenced group, he/she perceives the fate of the group as his or her own (Foote 1951; Tolman 1943).

In summary the self is comprised of several domains which are interrelated and are dynamically involved, this means each domain motivates the other's development. Therefore it is not the researcher's position that these self-concept domains (e.g. ideal, perceived, and social selves) operate in opposition to one another. Rather, the various domains operate in tandem, each contributing to the creation of an overall self-concept.

2.3. Multiple Selves

Markus and Kunda (1986) put forth the term "malleable" (or working) self-concept, which refers to a host of self-conceptions (e.g. ideal self, perceived self, social self) that can be made accessible at a given moment. They suggest that an individual's set of self-conceptions are possible selves, the selves one would like to be or is afraid of becoming. These selves function as incentives for behavior, providing images of the behavior for the future. They also function to provide an interpretative and evaluative context for the current view of the self (Markus and Wurf 1987).

The conceptualization of the malleable self has two important implications for the present study. First, the self is multifaceted and dynamic. Any particular self conception can be activated at any given time particularly due to social cues and situations, such as

one's hopes, fears, goals and identities (Aaker 1999). Second, conflicting traits may exist in an individual's self-concept. For example, a consumer might think of himself as both highly intelligent and unaccomplished. The relative accessibility of the two traits in a given situation determines which trait will be expressed (Linville and Carlston 1994). Markus and Kunda (1986) argue that a trait becomes accessible if it was just activated before an event, if it was evoked by an experience or a memory, or if it has been elicited by the social situations at a particular point in time. To this point, the self is regarded as stable, while also being malleable (Markus and Kunda 1986).

The concept of multiple selves is not new in the marketing discipline, but the degree of interest in multiple selves is new (Rowan and Cooper 1999). Although William James (1890) was one of the earliest scholars to discuss the divided nature of the self-concept, only recently has there been an increase in academic work that portrays the self as fragmented and fluid. In the consumer behavior literature, multiple selves have been characterized as the fragmented self (Emmons 1992), multiphrenic self (Firat and Shultz 1997, 2001), malleable self (Aaker 1999), and multiple identities (Kleine et al. 1993). While social scientists, as well as marketers do not have a clear consensus regarding the nature of the self, more scholars now agree that the self is plural and dynamic. Outside of the marketing discipline, this idea has been examined by a number of social psychologists (Gergen 1991; Baumgartner 2002; Rosenberg 1979; Brewer and Gardner 1996; Markus and Kunda 1986), among others.

2.4. Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior

In attempting to organize this vast and divergent literature on the self-concept, it is perhaps more fruitful to discuss the findings based on their level of dimensionality.

Self-concept researchers have viewed the self as one-dimensional, two-dimensional, and multidimensional. One-dimensional refers to an individual's overall-self concept (or the "actual self"), as one's perception and evaluation about oneself (e.g. Grub and Grathwohl 1967; Birdwell 1968). Two-dimensional refers to dual self-concepts of "actual self" and the "ideal self", as one's perception and evaluation of what one would like to be (e.g. Landon 1974; Belch and Landon 1977; Zinkhan and Hong 1991). Lastly, multidimensional refers to three or more self-concepts. Individuals belong to a host of social groups, each with its own distinct identity. As noted earlier, the multidimensional nature of the self has been regarded as the situational self, malleable self, possible selves, social identities, role identities, working self, and the fragmented self.

Using this organizing framework, a review of the self-concept studies in marketing is offered in the next section.

2.4.1. One-Dimensional Self-Concept Research

Congruency between self-concept and consumption behaviors were initially examined by consumer behavior researchers such as Grub and Grathwohl (1967) and Birdwell (1968). Not only were their studies among the first to introduce the self-concept into the marketing discipline, they established the value of the self-concept in consumer behavior. Grub and Grathwohl (1967) conceptualized the model of consuming behavior, which asserts that because the self concept is of value to the individual, their behavior will be directed toward the protection and enhancement of their self-concept. They suggest a more specific approach in examining the self- product image relationship by introducing self-theory, stating, "the concept of the self is more restricted than personality, which facilitates measurement and centers on the critical element of how the

individual perceives himself” (Grub and Grathwhol 1967, p. 23). Birdwell’s (1968) study found self-image to be more congruent with the owner’s brand of automobile than with seven alternative brands. Differences were found among ownership group’s perception of all of the automobile brands studied. Among the eight brands tested, substantial differences in the images of each car was found. Specifically, true differences exist between the images held of low-priced cars by owners of medium-priced and prestige cars. Lastly, Grub and Hupp (1968) developed a methodology to test the relationship between a consumer’s self-concept, automobile brand and brand strategies. Their methodology along with their proposed theory was supported, showing consumers of different brands in a product class perceive themselves to have significant differences in self-concepts.

A strong criticism of these initial studies is that they failed to measure causality, because self-product image congruence was measured after purchase (Evans 1968; Landon 1974). Therefore, the participants’ answers may have been fueled by their need to reduce dissonance. Another major criticism of this work was not all consumers were interested in revealing their actual self with their purchases (Landon 1974). This suggests that consumers have differing motivations for purchases beyond their one-dimensional “actual self”.

Belk (1988) extended the understanding of the self-concept with his notion of the extended self, which includes “body, internal processes, ideas and experiences, and those persons, places, and things to which one feels attached” (p. 140). According to Belk, possessions vary in their importance to the individual and can be seen as forming multiple layers around, what he refers to as the “core self”. His theory promotes a fluid

explanation of the self-concept, inclusive of culture, people and time, and has become the foundation for much of the work in consumer behavior on the role of consumption experiences in identity creation. More recently Gould (1991) conducted an open-ended survey of consumers and their self-concepts. His results suggest the presence of a single self-concept, which was inconsistent with other studies promoting the multidimensionality of the self-concept. In a similar study, Firat and Schultz (2001) provide contrasting results, revealing the fragmented nature of the self-concept. These inconsistencies and ambiguities led to the consideration of multiple identities as witnessed in two-dimensional and multi-dimensional research. Table 2.1 summarizes the one-dimensional self-concept studies found within the marketing literature.

Table 2.1
Review of One-Dimensional Self-Concept Literature in Marketing

One-dimensional Self-Concept Studies		
Author	Objective	Theory/Paradigm
Grub and Grathwohl 1967	Examined relationship between consumer self-concept and general consumption behavior	Self-theory and symbolic interactionism
Birdwell 1968	Examined relationship between self image and product image and auto perceptions across car owners.	Personality Theory
Belk 1988	Examined consumer possessions as extensions of the self-concept.	Multiple Literatures
Grub and Hupp 1968	Examined the relationship between consumer self-concept, automobile brands and brand stereotypes.	Self-theory
Gould 2001	Examined consumer's definition of their self-concept, dynamic self-concept.	Self-theory

2.4.2. Two-Dimensional Self-Concept Research

While research on the one-dimensional self provided great insight into the self-concept and product-image congruity, there was still a need to resolve a few of the ambiguities found in earlier studies. In response, researchers introduced the dual self-concept, comprised of an actual self and ideal self (e.g. Landon 1974; Belch and Landon 1977). Understanding which self- actual or ideal influenced the purchase decision became the focal point of these studies. Landon (1974) concluded that across all products, some participants were actualizers, while others were perfectionists. Actualizers were highly correlated with their actual self than with their ideal selves. Perfectionists were highly correlated with ideal selves, than with their actual selves. A lacks of consistent results, highlighted the need to understand the conditions under which self (actual vs. ideal) would operate (Landon 1974).

Belch and Landon (1977) found ownership to affect product ratings based on the two-dimensional self-concept. Specifically, product owners had higher correlations between purchase intentions and their ideal self-image, compared to correlations between purchase intention and their actual self-image. However, non-owners failed to show a high correlation between purchase intentions and both their actual and ideal self image. Other researchers attempted to prove the influence of the dual self-concept, but were yet unsuccessful (e.g. Ross 1971). This is not to suggest that two-dimensional research ended in the 1970s. In 1995, Hong and Zinkhan's study results indicate that brand memory is not mediated by the extent to which advertising expressions are congruent with viewers' self-concept. However, brand preference and purchase intention were shown to be influenced by the self-congruency of an ad. Aaker and Lee (2001) conducted four

experiments showing goals associated with approach and avoidance needs influence persuasion and that the accessibility of distinct self-views (independent vs. interdependent) moderates these effects. They find individuals with an accessible independent self-view are more persuaded by promotion-focused information that is consistent with an approach goal. Interdependent individuals are more persuaded by prevention focused information that is consistent with an avoidance goal. Table 2.2 summarizes the two-dimensional self-concept studies found within the marketing literature.

Table 2.2
Review of Two-Dimensional Self-Concept Literature in Marketing

Two-dimensional Self-Concept Studies		
Author	Objective	Theory/Paradigm
Ross 1971	Examined relationships between actual and ideal self-concepts, along with consumer brand preference.	Interpersonal self concept literature in social psychology
Landon 1974	Examined relationships between actual and ideal self-concepts, along with purchase intentions.	Self-concept and Personality Theory
Belch and Landon 1977	Examined the effects of social desirability and product ownership on actual self and ideal self, along with purchase decisions.	Self-concept
Hong and Zinkhan 1995	Examined the effects of the actual self and ideal self on advertising effectiveness as a function of ad recall and attitude towards the ad.	Self-schema Theory
Aaker and Lee 2001	Examined the effects of self-construal on approach and avoidance needs.	Self-construal Theory and Cultural Psychology

2.4.3. Multidimensional Self-Concept Research

Moving away from the two-dimensional studies and the associated difficulties in generating the prominence of the actual self over the ideal self, researchers began looking at the multidimensional self. Schenk and Holman (1979) conceptualized the situational self, as attitudes, perceptions, and feeling the individual wishes other individuals in the situation to formulate about his/her character. They introduced this term to include the influence that various situations may have on the enactment of specific selves. By allowing consumer preferences to vary with the self-image they want to express in a specific situation, the situational self has become widely used in scenario based consumer research.

The malleable self concept, or the working self-concept (Markus and Kunda 1986) has been widely used and accepted in consumption of aesthetic cosmetic surgery (Schouten 1991), general consumption behaviors (Morgan 1993), brand choice (Aaker 1999), and risk taking behaviors (Mandel 2003).

Social identity theory and identity theory have both aided researchers in conceptualizing multiple identities in consumer behavior. Social Identity Theory suggests an individual identity emerges from a reflexive activity of self-categorization in social groups to which they belong (Tajfel and Turner 1985); whereas Identity Theory is concerned with the associated meanings, resources, and expectation with an individual's roles (Stets and Burke 2000). Consumer behavior research has used these theories to reveal that consumption experiences are associated more strongly with specific identities and roles than with the global self (Kleine et al. 1993; Laverie et al. 2002; Arnett et al. 2003). Along these lines, identity salience has also been shown to influence attitudes

toward congruous brands (Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed 2002; Dimofte, Forehand, and Deshpande 2003) and the frequency in which identity-related consumption behaviors are enacted (Kleine et al. 1993; Laverie et al. 2002; Arnett et al. 2003).

More recently, contemporary researchers are using consumer narratives to assess the multidimensionality of their self-concepts (Fournier 1998; Escalas 2003; Ahuvia 2005). Thompson (1997) uses hermeneutics to interpret consumer stories detailing their experiences with brands, services, and general shopping. The stories reveal how consumers perceive their identity and how their perceptions are made manifest in everyday consumption activities. Fournier's study (1998) on consumer relationships with their brands finds that individuals buy multiple brands in support of multiple dimensions of their self-concept. Ahuvia (2005) examines the role of loved possessions and activities in the construction of a coherent identity narrative. He found individuals use three strategies, namely labeled demarcating, compromising, and synthesizing for resolving identity conflicts. However, he never reported the multiple identities among the respondents, leaving a need for the consideration of multiple identities, and their associated meanings.

Table 2.3 summarizes the multidimensional self-concept studies found within the marketing literature.

Table 2.3
Review of Multidimensional Self-Concept Literature in Marketing

Multidimensional Self-Concept Studies		
Author	Objective	Theory/Paradigm
Schenk and Holman 1979	Examined the relationship between a consumer's situational self and brands	Symbolic Interactionism
Sirgy 1982	Examined self-concept motives leading to purchase intention.	Product-Image Congruity Theory
Solomon 1983	Examined the relevance of product symbolism in self-definition and role performance.	Symbolic Interactionism
Shouten 1991	Examined the harmonious self-concept through the consumption of aesthetic plastic surgery.	Working Self-concept Theory, Social roles
Morgan 1993	Examined brand choice relevant to possible selves as elements of the self-schema.	Working Self-concept
Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993	Examined salient role identities their related behaviors.	Social Identity Theory and Role Theory
Firat and Venkatesh 1995	Examined the postmodern fragmentation of the self.	Postmodern Discourse
Thompson 1997	Examined multiple identity construction and maintenance through consumption.	Hermeneutics
Hogg and Savolainen 1998	Examined the relationship between the situational self and brand image, along with the influence of public and private situations on brand choice.	Symbolic Interactionism
Aaker 1999	Examined the relationship between malleable self and various consumption scenarios.	Working-self Theory
Laverie, Kleine, Kleine 2002	Examined the role of appraisals on discourse and identity importance.	Identity Theory, Appraisal Theory, and Symbolic Interactionism
Arnett, German, and Hunt 2002	Examined charitable giving relative to identity and related behaviors.	Identity Theory
Mandel 2003	Examined self-construal on financial and social risk taking.	Working Self-concept
Reed II 2004	Examined relationship between salient social identities, self-importance and purchase intentions.	Social Identity Theory
Ahuvia 2005	Examined the relationship between loved objects and possessions to construct a coherent narrative identity.	Narrative Processing

2.5. Research Gaps

The self-concept studies in consumer behavior have undoubtedly expanded our knowledge of multiple selves. However the literature is fragmented and dominated by studies investigating relationships between a specific self-concept dictated by the researchers and related behaviors (Baumgartner 2002) leading to two distinct gaps in the literature.

Gap1: The current body of research on self-concept based consumer behavior examines multiple selves that are either measured or made salient in an experimental setting, prohibiting participants to express other selves important to them beyond the research environment. By testing the relationship between identity motives and identity centrality, a process for identity importance emerges in the analysis (Breakwell 1993). This is contrary to specifying a particular identity for the participant, which can sometimes mask the conditional effects of research stimuli. In broadening the study of multiple identities through identity centrality, researchers will be able to understand how consumers negotiate multiple identities that are important to them in a consumption setting.

Gap2: While identity centrality may provide insights into how multiple identities are managed in the marketplace, the second gap is concerned with the behavioral consequences of identity centrality in consumer attitudes and behavior. Current studies have failed to examine the importance a particular identity has for the participant, creating a gap between identity importance and behavioral outcome. By investigating the level of identity centrality in behavioral outcomes, researchers can establish causality between the identity and behavior. This is based on the premise that individuals who

assign a high level of importance to the identity are more likely to be committed to behaviors supporting the identity, and are likely to have enhanced behavior, attitudes, and cognitions in support of that identity.

2.6. Chapter Summary

As shown in this chapter, research on the self-concept in marketing has been examined from the one-dimensional, two-dimensional, and multi-dimensional views of the self. While this literature has expanded our knowledge in this field, the consideration of identity centrality has been virtually ignored. This omission provides the rationale behind the research gaps addressed in this dissertation. By addressing these gaps, it is hoped that a broadened view of the multiple self will emerge.

To address the first research gap regarding the link between various identity motives and identity centrality, a qualitative study focused on identity-motivated consumption was conducted. The next chapter reports the findings of this study offering evidence for nine identity motives which are presented along with research propositions, tested in Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation.

Chapter 3

Essay 1-Isolating Multiple Selves: Exploring the Role of Identity Centrality in the Formation of Self-Brand Connections

In this chapter, the results of a qualitative study among 13 informants are reported. Informants were interviewed to explore how the self-concept is implicated in their consumer behavior and to what extent identity motives play a role in self-brand interactions. Using thematic analysis, evidence for nine identity motives is found and incorporated into a framework of identity-motivated consumption. The framework consists of two main components: (1) identity motives leading to a central identity, and (2) the moderating influences of reference group brand associations and brand symbolism. The framework contends that these two components influence the degree to which a brand is incorporated into an individual's self-concept (e.g. self-brand connection). Testable research propositions are put forth and implications for marketing managers are discussed.

3.1. Introduction

Self-brand connections has been examined through an individual's narrative processing (Escalas 2004), reference groups (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005), and from the perspective of children and adolescents (Chaplin and Roedder-John 2005). These studies along with prior research suggest self-brand connections are formed through a matching process whereby a consumer identifies a product or a brand that is congruent with their overall self-image, be it desired or actual (Grub and Grathwohl 1967; Levy 1959; McClelland 1951; Sirgy 1981; 1982). As product images are brought to mind

similar images about the self are triggered, and a comparison between the brand and the individual's self-concept is made. A positive comparison between the individual and the brand results in the individual perceiving the brand congruent with his or her overall self-concept. However it is unclear as to how self-brand connections are formed when multiple identities are relevant to a particular brand.

Self-brand connections “need only occur between the brand and one aspect of the self, with more schematic aspects of the self resulting in stronger connections” (Escalas 2004, p. 170). This point is illustrated with an example of a consumer who has multiple self “aspects”, relating her professional “aspect” to the Burberry brand (luxury line of handbags, accessories, shoes and clothing) and her mother “aspect” to the Gymboree brand (clothing line for children), with both aspects being connected to the self independently. While this illustration offers clarity to the multiplicity of the self and self-brand connections, how an individual establishes importance among the different “aspects” of their selves has yet to receive full consideration. To address this shortcoming, identity centrality defined as the psychological importance assigned to an identity (Stryker and Serpe 1994; Settles 2004) is used to explain how individuals manage multiple identities, and how different identities become associated with particular brands.

Identity centrality is hypothesized to be associated with motivation (Bagozzi, Bergami and Leone 2003). Relatedly identity motives have been found to guide identity centrality (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge and Scabini 2006, Breakwell 1986, 1993) This is significant because if an individual is motivated to purchase a brand to support a particular aspect of their self-concept, then similar motivations should guide not only

whether or not a brand is incorporated into an individual's self-concept, but also the degree to which the integration occurs. To date, the relationship between identity importance and identity motivations has yet to be examined, leaving a gap in the literature on self-brand interactions.

The research reported in this study was undertaken with the objective to address the research gaps identified above. Specifically, the primary objective of this research was to substantiate the existence of multiple identity motives posited to influence self-brand interactions and identity centrality. A second but related objective was to demonstrate the external validity of the identity centrality proposition grounding this dissertation. Both objectives were accomplished by (1) integrating theory and research on the self-concept and consumer behavior to identify specific identity motives, (2) reporting the qualitative findings insights obtained in an exploratory investigation of identity-motivated consumption, (3) advancing a framework showing the relationship between identity motives, identity centrality, and self-brand connections, and (4) offering propositions to stimulate future research related to identity centrality and self-brand connections. The discussion to follow culminates in an articulation of a research agenda capable of investigating these potential insights further.

3.2. Theoretical Framework

Identity process theory provides an integrated model of social psychological processes and motivational principles, referred to as identity motives (Breakwell 1986). These motives guide the identity construction processes that dictate what "endstates" are deemed desirable for the structure of identity. Identity motives also and determine what changes will be made within identity and are associated with social influences and

interactions (Breakwell 1993). The Identity process theory was developed in response to the boundaries of the social identity theory proposed by Tajfel (1974). It is argued that the predictive reliability of the social identity theory is low due to its limited focus of one identity process, namely self-esteem (Breakwell 1986). Mindfully, self-esteem is not considered an identity process in this study. Rather, self-esteem is conceptualized as an identity motive.

According to the identity process theory, there are two processes involved in the building of an identity. The first is the assimilation-accommodation process, and the second is the evaluation process. Assimilation-accommodation is a memory system¹; it absorbs new elements of identity (e.g. values, attitudes, style, or interpersonal networks) and adjusts the existing identity to place them; whereas evaluation involves the allocation of value to identity elements. Both processes are deemed information processing systems biased towards self-interest rather than accuracy in constructing identity structures (Breakwell 1986, 1993).

The overall relevance of individual identity motives is evidenced in their outcomes, or structures. Identity structures are manifestations of identity motives and are influenced by the degree of motive satisfaction. It has been shown that different self evaluation motives are relevant to predictions of cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes (Dauenbeimer, Stablberg, Spreemann, Sedikides 2002; Swann, Griffin, Predmore, and Gaines 1987). As it relates to identity, these are distinguished as perceived centrality, affect, and enactment. Perceived centrality is the cognitive dimension of identity. It addresses the chief importance each identity motive has on a consumer's overall identity. Identity affect is how happy or unhappy an identity makes the individual.

Lastly, identity enactment is the extent to which an individual will show who he or she is to others. Because individuals are likely to engage in behaviors and be more committed to identities that carry high levels of importance, the study focused on identity centrality in self-brand interactions.

Using identity process theory as a guide, the current study proposes that identity motives guide identity centrality in self-brand interactions.

3.3. Research Method and Study Design

The objectives of this research guided the selection of method and articulation of the study design. First, the exploratory goals of the study dictated the use of semi-structured depth interviews. This method is better suited to the goal of understanding the relationship between identity centrality and self-brand connections than other methodological approaches (e.g. unstructured interviews, survey interviews, participant observation). This is because semi-structured depth interviews allow subjective meanings to be gathered or articulated. Survey interviews typically have a fixed set of questions and the researcher generally keeps the order of questions the same. Given this, the researcher is limited in his or her ability to probe the participants on their responses. Participant observation allows rich meaning to emerge from the data. In some cases, the researcher becomes a full participant and in some cases a spectator of sorts. This type of data collection was not feasible given the exploratory objectives of the research.

Thirteen interviews were conducted. The sampling included both students and non-students; gender and ethnic affiliations were also varied. The interviews were conducted with 7 students, 6 non-students across three ethnic groups, namely African American, Caucasian, and Hispanics. Informants were chosen randomly to participate in

¹ As originally presented by the author.

the study. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the demographic variables collected for each participant. Interviews lasted on average about 30 to 50 minutes. They were audio recorded and in some cases videotaped when an audio recorder was not available.

Table 3.1
Informant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Race	Occupation	Marital	Employment
Nikki	19	Female	White	Student	Single	Part-time
Tonya	20	Female	Black	Student	Single	Part-time
Erica	21	Female	Black	Student	Single	Unemployed
Erroll	33	Male	Black	Financial Analyst	Single	Full-time
David	37	Male	Black	Firefighter	Divorced	Full-time
Laramie	25	Male	Black	Civil Engineer	Single	Full-time
Danielle	21	Female	White	Student	Single	Unemployed
Rebekkah	23	Female	Hispanic	Student	Single	Part-time
Stephanie	24	Female	White	Student	Single	Unemployed
Stedman	18	Male	Bi-racial	Student	Single	Unemployed
Candace	33	Female	White	Health Information Manager	Married	Full-time
Norman	46	Male	White	Marketing Director at an Engineering Firm	Married	Full-time
Marcela	37	Female	Bi-racial	Graduate Admissions Officer	Single	Full-time

All interviews began with a brief introduction of the researcher and the respondent. Respondents were then provided with a brief description of the research project and were told that the interview dealt with “how they shop and choose brands within the marketplace”. Next, the terms and constructs used in the interview were explained (i.e. brand, identity). The researcher then led a warm-up discussion of the informant’s general interest in brands by allowing participants to talk freely about their favorite brands (unspecific to any product category). This was followed by a series of

questions addressing their (a) beliefs concerning the influence of the self-concept on brand consumption (b) perceptions of how they view themselves (c) perceptions of how others view them in the marketplace (based on the brands they use), (d) motivations influencing brand consumption and (e) factors beyond the self-concept that guide brand self-brand interaction. A list of sample questions posed in the interviews is presented below in Table 3.2. A full listing of questions is available in the Appendix.

Table 3.2
Sample Interview Questions

Domain: Brand Preference
<p>Can you name your favorite brands? (in any particular category)</p> <p>What are your thoughts on others who purchase things that are really expensive?</p> <p>Name a brand that you would absolutely not wear.</p> <p>What does a particular brand say about you?</p> <p>When you think of Brand X, what comes to mind?</p> <p>What does Brand X mean to you?</p> <p>What does the (specific feature) of Brand X mean to you?</p> <p>Does Brand X help communicate your identity to others (whether you know them or not)?</p> <p>Does Brand X help you become the person you want to be?</p>

Interview protocols were modified during data collection to take advantage of emerging themes (Spradley 1979). This was facilitated by a series of probing questions to further investigate these emerging themes. For example, if a participant responded to one of the questions and introduced a theme that the researcher was unfamiliar with (e.g. identity threat, need for authentication), probing questions were asked to gain

clarification. Once the researcher obtained enough information from the participant to understand the theme, the interview guideline was once again assumed.

3.4. Data Analysis

Verbatim transcripts of the interviews were prepared by the author and served as the data set for this study. Over 60 pages of single-spaced text were generated by the thirteen informants. Thematic analysis was used to evaluate the data. This technique is known to provide a flexible (in terms of theory independence) approach in analyzing rich, detailed, and complex data. It is also a method that is typically independent of theory and epistemology, and can be applied across a range of theoretical and epistemological approaches (Braun and Clarke 2006). Analysis followed the general procedures of thematic analysis as presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3
Steps in Thematic Analysis

Order of Thematic Process	Explanation
1. Familiarizing yourself with your data	Transcribing the data, reading the data, noting down your initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features.
3. Search for themes	Collating codes into the data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing themes	Check if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic map of the analysis.
5. Defining/naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each of them, and conducting inter-rater reliability.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back to the analysis to the research question and literature, producing scholarly report of the analysis.

Source: Braun and Clarke (2006), Adapted from Labov (1972, p.363)

The first round of analysis involved a within-person analysis. The goal of this analysis was a holistic interpretation of motivated consumption, as it is manifest within the individual consumer. The analysis asks whether there exists a theme or themes that capture similarities in descriptions of the informant's motivations for brand selection and lend coherence to obtained responses. The within person analysis began with a reading of the transcripts in which recurrent, behavioral tendencies were identified. Specific brand related narratives were then considered for their manifestations of these themes as evidence of identity motivated consumption emerged.

Broad higher-order themes (e.g. motivated consumption) helped to provide a general overview of the direction of the interview, while detailed lower order codes (e.g. specific identity motives) enabled fine distinctions to be made, both within and between cases (King 2004). This hierarchical coding allowed the analysis of text at different levels of specificity.

As Dey (1993) explains, codes must be meaningful with regards to the data but also meaningful in relation to other categories. Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the researcher and refers to “the most basic segment, or element of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis 1998, p.63).

The coded data differs from the units of analysis which are considered themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Themes are broader than coding and to some extent depend on whether ideas are more ‘data-driven’ or ‘theory-driven’. The current research was coded based on the goal of the researcher to identify particular features of the data set, addressing motivations of self-brand interactions. If portions of the transcription failed to

contain information germane to this topic, the data was not extracted. Therefore, the researcher systematically worked through the entire data set giving attention to each data item. Throughout this process, interesting aspects within the data were identified and formed the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the entire data set. Table 3.4 shows sample data extracted and coded from the full transcripts are coded. Fully coded extracted data are available in the Appendix.

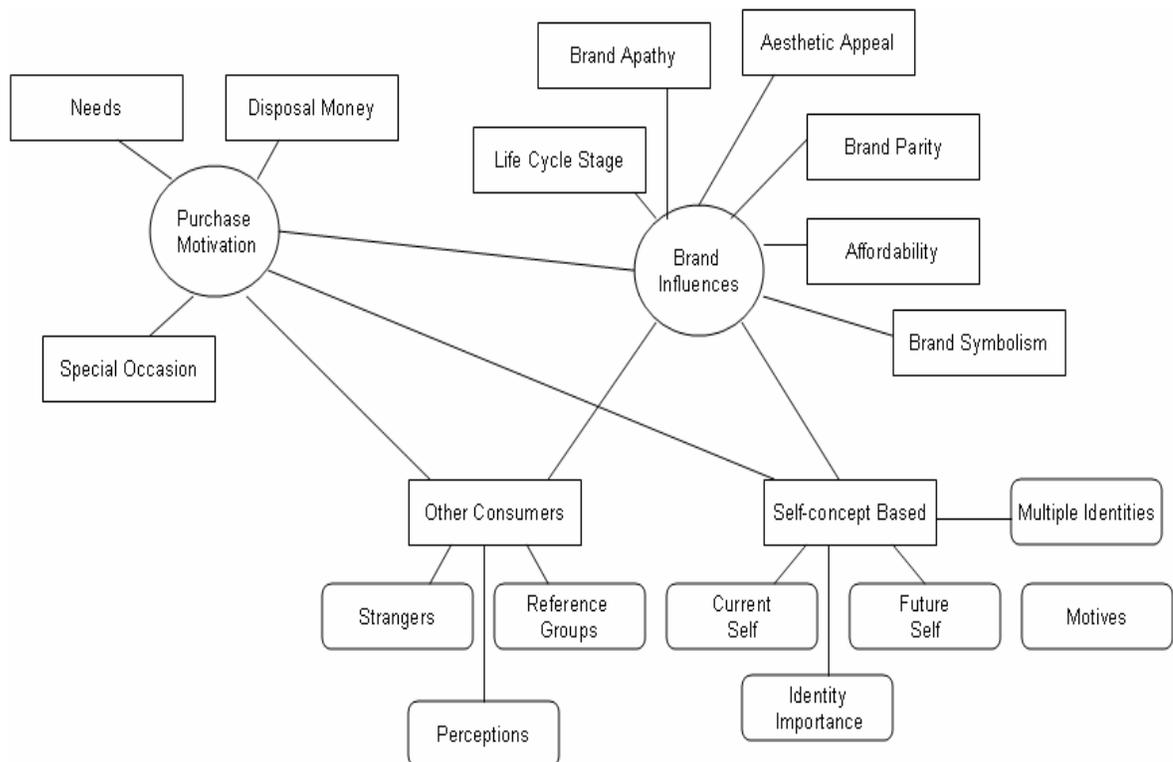
Table 3.4
Sample Representation of Coded Data Extracts

Data Extracted	Coded for:
But if they were really cute, I would never tell any of my friends, and I would never let them see the inside label cause' it will say Payless. And if we had to go somewhere to take off our shoes, I wouldn't take them off, I'd be too embarrassed. I can't have my friends thinking I shop at Payless.	5 Brand prestige 6 Conspicuous brand use 7 Reference groups 8 Belonging motive 9 Security motive
For where I am in my life right now, those cars are more reflective of the fact that I have reached a certain level. So I wouldn't buy an Acura because its looks just like a Toyota and everybody has a Toyota. I wouldn't buy a Cadillac, cause that is my dad's car. I wouldn't buy an Infiniti or Jaguar, because Jaguars are an old retired man's car. It's not a girl car; it's a guy car, an old man car. And I am not the SUV type, even though some of them look nice, I am not the truck type.	1. Life cycle stage, brand congruency 2. Distinctiveness motive 3. Brand user imagery 4. Family brand associations 5. Self-consistency motive 6. Identity threat 7. Brand-identity congruency

The second level of interpretation involved an across-person analysis. The goal here was to discover convergent themes capturing commonalities and patterns within the data, across individuals. In addition to the motives, key constructs were extracted from the data, coded, and organized for subsequent analysis. An initial thematic map resulted

in two main themes, purchase motivations and brand influences (see Figure 3.1). Central ideas that were coded at this stage included basic purchase such as special occasions, identified needs, other consumers, and the availability of disposal income. Brand influences dealt with internal or external factors impacting an individual's brand choice. These influences included brand apathy, brand parity, brand symbolism, self-concept, life cycle stage, aesthetic appeal, affordability, and other consumers.

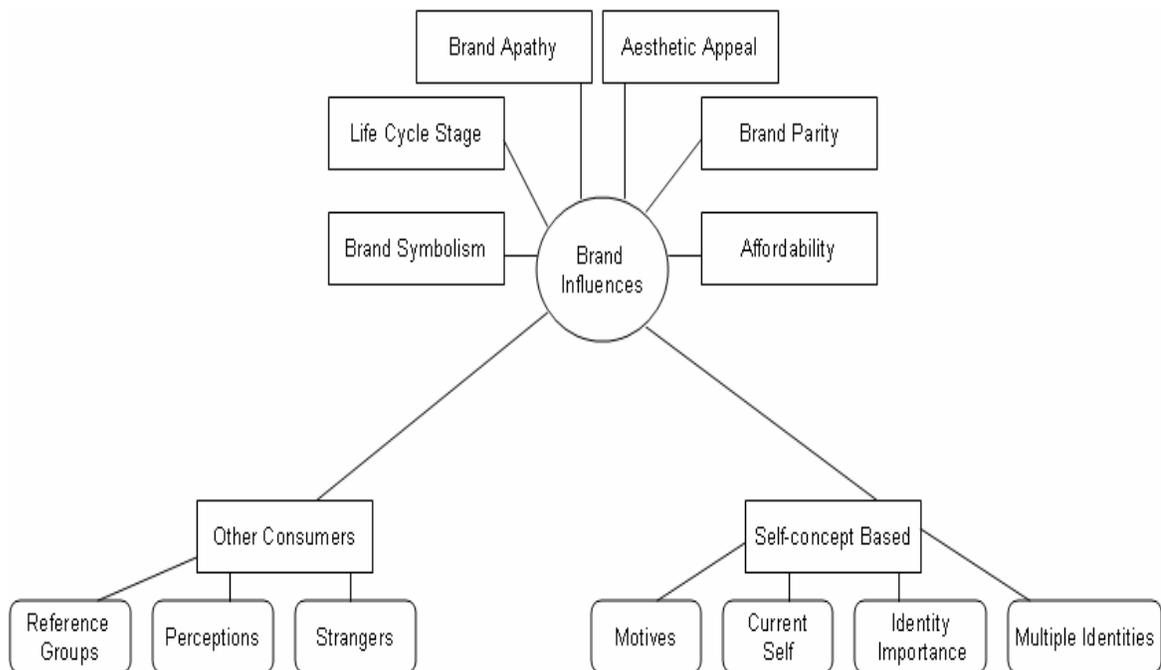
**Figure 3.1
Initial Thematic Map**



After refinement, the thematic map was reduced to one primary theme, brand influences. This theme was captured by eight sub-themes: brand apathy, aesthetic appeal, life cycle stage, brand parity, brand symbolism, affordability, other consumers, and self-

concept based influences (see Figure 3.2). The reduction of the thematic map was based primarily on the research objective, which was to identify motivations of self-brand interactions. Thus the broad order theme of brand influences was isolated, and the sub-themes of “other consumers” and “self-concept based influences” were further broken down into individual factors. Based on the refined thematic map, the current research focuses on the motives identified in the analysis along with the relationship between the self-concept and motivated brand consumption. Each motive serves as a lower order code to the sub-theme “self-concept based” brand influence, while brand influences served as the higher-order theme.

Figure 3.2
Final Thematic Map



3.5. How Identity Motives Lead to Identity Centrality

Based on the final thematic map in Figure 3.2, the focus of data analysis surrounded self-concept based brand influences. In particular, the transcriptions were coded for identity motives and the presence of multiple identities. The results reveal identity motives were influential in self-brand interactions and oftentimes played a significant role in a specific identity becoming central. This is because, identity motives beyond self-esteem and self-consistency aided them in narrowing their evoked set of brands. The qualitative findings show individuals used brand associations to satisfy their motivations of: *self-esteem*, *distinctiveness*, *continuity*, *belonging*, *self-efficacy*, *belonging*, *meaning*, *recognition*, *consistency*, and *security*. These identity motives were based on a review of identity influences in both the marketing and social psychology literatures, and further supported by the respondents interviewed. Next, each motive is identified, defined, and its relevance to self-brand connections is provided in the form of testable research propositions.

3.5.1. Self-Esteem Motive

The *self-esteem motive* is defined as “the motivation to maintain and enhance a positive conception of oneself” (Gecas 1982, p. 20). This definition is similar to that of Sirgy (1982) who defined self-esteem as the tendency to seek experiences that enhances an individual’s self-concept. Self-esteem may be increased directly through self-enhancement or indirectly through self-improvement. This motive is typically maintained through self-verification (Sedikides and Strube 1997).

Sirgy (1982) suggested the experience of building self-esteem allows individuals to enhance their overall self-concept. This is evidenced by informant Tonya², who talks about her fashion brands: “Baby Phat outfits get me compliments; they make me feel good about myself. They say stuff like... oh she got some money, cause’ she got a Baby Phat outfit on”. Since wearing this particular brand of clothing generated a positive level of self-worth through appreciation and compliments, creating self-esteem through fashion was important as others perceived her as wealthy. Self-esteem helped foster a coherent view of herself that was beyond fashion; such that others who perceived her would draw other implications about her self-concept (e.g. wealth) beyond the image of the Baby Phat brand.

Beyond receiving compliments and feeling appreciated by other individuals, another informant talked about what it means to have low self-esteem in fashion. For her self-esteem was a matter of conspicuous consumption, and internally driven. Her, self-worth was not based on how others viewed her, but rather, her internal sense of confidence. When questioned about ideal way to exhibit self-esteem through fashion, Nikki states:

Wearing what you like, not thinking about what other people are going to judge what you are wearing, and I think someone who has self-esteem doesn’t have to wear something really revealing, promote a bad message. Something that... maybe it doesn’t look good to you, but if they like it (meaning the person who is wearing it) then they are happy wearing it. Like a shirt from Target.

Tonya’s and Nikki’s responses represent two distinct sources of self-esteem. One in which an individual’s worth is assessed based on external assessment from others. The other in which self-esteem is intrinsically assessed independent of others’ perceptions.

² The names of all informants have been changed to conceal their true identity.

The external view (e.g. Tonya) represents a form of self-verification, which allows her to maintain her self-esteem (Sedikides and Strube 1997) through fashion. The internal view (e.g. Nikki) is tangential to self-affirmation theory (Steele 1988), whereby an individual is motivated to maintain a level of integrity within their self-concept. Despite their differences in how they view self-esteem, it is recognized that this motive can drive self-brand interactions that enhances one's self esteem; or in Nikki's case serve as a motive for the omission of brands that give others the opportunity to assess her self-esteem.

3.5.2. Distinctiveness Motive

The *distinctiveness motive* refers to the establishment and maintenance of a sense of differentiation from others. (Brewer 1991; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, and Breakwell 2000). When distinctiveness needs are threatened or frustrated, individuals will engage in cognitive or behavioral coping strategies to restore a sense of distinctiveness (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje 1999; Breakwell, 1988; Brewer 1991). The distinctiveness motive was used more frequently by respondents to reveal motivations for consuming in conjunction with a given social identity compared to a person identity.

With regard to her social identity, Rebecca's satisfies motivations of distinctiveness within her reference group. When asked if she desires to be distinctive among her close friends, or with strangers, she suggests that group distinctiveness doesn't really happen, and continues to talk about her social group of friends:

So you have people that dress very punk rockish and they are trying to be different (they wear black things and wear chains)... gothic. But then there is a whole group of them, so they are not different. For me it is more of the friends that I come into contact with on a daily basis, I'd rather be distinctive among my friends versus people I didn't know.Some people have to buy a brand and it has to have the name all over it, like BEBE in big bold letters, I can't stand

that. Like the Louis Vuitton bags, the same thing, I want high fashion, but not like what everyone else has. I don't want to go around looking like them.

Rebecca's thoughts about the 'Gothic' individuals, highlights the distinctiveness of an overall group. In this scenario, members of the group strive to be collectively distinctive from the larger population. This is considered a form of intergroup distinctiveness (Tajfel and Turner 1979). On an individual level, Rebecca talks about her interest in wearing high fashion clothing, however she doesn't want to be "branded" like everyone else in her group. She prefers to wear clothing that has covert labeling. Her behavior is supported by the Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (Brewer 1991), which states individuals strive for both assimilation and distinctiveness within groups. Rebecca's responses suggest she strives for within group distinctiveness because it is more relevant to her identity goals. Conclusively, distinctiveness is an important motive of identity presentation because it serves as a means of self-evaluation through social comparison.

3.5.3. Continuity Motive

The *continuity* motive is defined as an individual's "motivation to maintain a sense of connection across time and situation" within identity (Breakwell 1988, p. 24). This motive represents an identifiable conceptual thread uniting the past, present, and future within a person's identity across time (Breakwell 1988). James (1892) was one of the first to promote continuity as a chief feature of the identity.

This motive focuses on a particular memory, or an identity that unites their current self-concept with an experience from their past, or perhaps, a desired image in the future. This behavior can be thought of as a type of identity nostalgia. Take for example, Candace, she is a Health Information Systems Manager, and is expecting her first child soon. It's a girl, so here she talks about the things she would like to share with daughter

from her childhood, and even the products she used as child that she will also purchase for her daughter. She explains why she still uses the same brand of moisturizer from a child, and how she will use the same brand on her daughter.

Palmer's Cocoa Butter, I used it as a moisturizer, and have used it ever since. With the impending stretch marks, I have been putting it on my belly twice a day. And when she is old enough, I'll use it on her (unborn daughter). Let's see what else. Oh yes, barrettes and beads in my hair, my mother would braid our hair and make it pretty with the beads and barrettes. I can't recall any brands of them, because I was so little, but I want to do her (unborn daughter) hair the same way. I don't really know how to braid but I will learn. I want her to experience a lot of the same things I did when I was a little girl (smiling).

Candace's current use of the Palmer's Cocoa Butter stems from her use of the product as a child. Even as she goes through her pregnancy, she continues to use the brand. As an adult she has access to a host of different brands of moisturizer, but she has opted to continue to the Palmer's brand. Her commitment to use a product from her childhood unites her childhood self to her adult self through continued consumption of the brand. Her plans to introduce her daughter to the brand and braid her hair in the same manner as her mom did to her, shows she is establishing continuity between her childhood identity and her soon-to-be mother identity.

3.5.4. Self-Efficacy Motive

The *self-efficacy* motive is defined as an individual's desire to maintain and enhance feelings of "competence and control" (Breakwell 1993, p. 205). Bandura (1977) argues the role of self-efficacy beliefs in human functioning is that "people's level of motivation, affective states, and actions are based more on what they believe than on what is objectively true" (p. 2). For this reason, how individual's behave can often be

better predicted by the beliefs they hold about their capabilities than by what they are actually capable of accomplishing.

With the increase use of self-service technologies and increased choices in the marketplace, consumers will increasingly become motivated to show feelings of competence and control. Depending on the identity in question, the need for competence and control can manifest itself in a host of different ways. For example, older consumers like Norman, exhibit competence by relying not only on their experience with the brand, but also their knowledge of the product category. When asked why he continues to be a loyal Volvo customer, he talks about his knowledge and experience with the Volvo brand.

Well like I said I like to shop based on my smarts, and if I am going to invest 30 grand into a car, I want it to last at least until my retirement kicks in (laughing). Volvos are good cars. They last. My station wagon, I have had that car for almost 12 years now. And it runs pretty well. With the exception of a few minor repairs, I haven't really had any major problems.

His mentioning of his smarts, length of ownership and the small number of repairs are indicators of his self-efficacy. In the next excerpt, he explains his role as a father and husband in his decision to buy Volvos:

Being the responsible father, I wanted Sascha (his daughter) to have a car that was going to last her a while, at least until she was able to put a dent into her student loans. She would have a reliable car, and wouldn't have to worry about buying a new one. Well not at least until she was in a position to afford a new one. If she is a smart girl like her father, she'd buy a Volvo, when that time came around (smiling). My wife, well she runs a Jewelry store, and she is price conscious like me. But she wanted a nice car without us both having to spend a lot of money. So the solution to that is.... I kept the old station wagon, and she

drives the newer sedan. We are both sold on the quality of Volvos. I don't need to convince her much.

Norman's commitment to providing reliable transportation for his family is exemplified through his choice of the Volvo brand for both his wife and daughter. As a husband and father his desire to exhibit competence in finding automobiles for the two of them is manifest in his second quote, where he talks about giving his daughter a Volvo for her graduation gift, and giving his wife the new Sedan. His experience with the Volvo brand for 12 years reveals his knowledge of the brand. Thus he is not only motivated to satisfy feelings of self-efficacy of autos and/or Volvos for his daughter and wife, but he is also motivated to demonstrate his competency and knowledge of the Volvo brand.

Self-efficacy perceptions help determine what individuals do with the knowledge and skills they have in selecting a specific brand. More importantly, high levels of self-efficacy allow individuals to feel skilled in the marketplace. The self-efficacy motive appears to be important for identity presentation due to the enduring beliefs that motivate behavioral capabilities of competence and mastery.

3.5.5. Belonging Motive

The belonging motive is defined as the need to maintain or enhance feelings of closeness to, or acceptance by other people, whether in dyadic relationships or within a group Baumeister and Leary (1995). These authors identified this motive as a "fundamental human motivation" with two main features (p.47). First, individuals need frequent personal contact or interaction with other individuals. These interactions are affectively positive or pleasant, but more importantly they should be free from conflict and negative affect. Second, individuals need to perceive that there is an interpersonal

bond or relationship marked by stability, affective concern, and continuation into the foreseeable future.

The belonging motive captures two important aspects of group influences, social embeddedness and intimacy. Individuals are socially embedded in their groups and use their group memberships as a source of reference during consumption experiences (Bearden and Etzel 1982; Escalas and Bettman 2005). A variety of affiliation-based scenarios emerge based on this intention, leading to a particular identity to becoming central. Erroll, a financial advisor, explains his need for intimacy with family and friends when considering what type of automobile he would buy:

I associate the F150 with friends, because with friends we think of intimacy. With the regular cab, not the extended cab, but the regular cab, you can pretty much fit one person, maybe two. They have close seats which provides for a lot of intimacy between people. And what's one thing that friends ask people to do, and that is to go out. You know when you got a truck, people ask "can you haul this and haul that". Also, the practicality of the truck.

His mentioning of the intimacy, as well as the notion of being needed by his friends to haul items satisfies his need to belong. The Ford F-150 will enable him to be needed by his friends, as well as provide intimacy for him and others when riding in the cab.

The need to belong with socially identified others, including family and friends evolves around some level of reciprocal action, associative needs, and repeated interactions. Brand associations that satisfy an individual's belonging motive aids in identity centrality, as witnessed in the case of Erroll. This motive is important for its affective value, and as a means of subjective well-being through group affiliation.

3.5.6. Meaning Motive

The *meaning motive* refers to the need to find significance or purpose in one's own existence (Baumeister 1991). Marketers have long considered an individual's search for meaning a critical feature of consumer behavior. The depiction of one's existence as meaningful is a principal attribute of psychological well-being (McCracken 1986; 1988), self presentation (Schau and Gilly 2003), and narrative processing (Escalas 2004). A consumer's search for meaning plays an essential role in brand choice (Ng and Houston 2006), and brand relationships (Fournier 1998). Stephanie, a recent college graduate, explains why she wears the Abercrombie and Fitch brand (*the researcher begins the conversation and the dialogue continues thereafter*):

When you see others wearing A and F and you don't have it on, what do you think?

What do I think? Well most people I see are younger girls, and I think what a brat, their mom buys them all of their clothes (laughing). But the reason that I like A and F is really stupid, but I like the moose on their shirts. Because I like moose.

Why?

Because it's cute, and I'll buy anything with birds and moose on it. Also my mom collects Christmas moose and things like that.

What if Louis Vuitton made a handbag that has its LVs all over it, and then they had moose on it, would you buy it? (*The informant mentioned earlier that she refused to carry Louis Vuitton handbags because they are carried by everyone, and they were typically fake handbags.*)

If it was cute then yeah, because I like moose. I always say like for Christmas people either have a snowman or Santa Clause, my mom used to be all snowman and Santas, but I am going to be reindeer and moose. We usually have one (moose) that we decorate every year.

Any other reasons you like Abercrombie and Fitch, besides the moose?

Probably because it is the highest (*most expensive*) out of American Eagle and all of them, and Hollister.

The significance of brands can take on an assortment of meanings. As witnessed with the case of Stephanie, meaning can originate from various experiences and can permeate a host of consumption experiences (i.e. Abercrombie and Fitch, Christmas moose). What is particularly interesting about her significance for moose is that it is not only based on a family tradition surrounding Christmas, but has also extended into her choice of fashion brands.

The level of significance a consumer assigns to a brand builds a historical narrative of identity across time. In this way, the importation of meaning aids in identity maintenance and creation. Thus a brand that evokes meaning for the consumer becomes imbedded in their identity (LaTour, LaTour, and Zinkhan 2007; Escalas and Bettman 2005), and is likely to have a high level of importance during self-brand interactions.

3.5.7. Recognition Motive

The *recognition motive* is defined as the need to be acknowledged or rewarded. Acknowledgement can come in the form of benefits directly related to the individual's actual or desired self concept and can increase the individual's attractiveness, power, and commitment to the brand (Elliot and Wattanasuwan 1998). Alternatively, as in the case of Marcela, an older woman who is a Graduate Admissions Director at a small liberal arts college, acknowledgement can be negatively related to the individual's actual or desired self-concept. She was asked if others assess her based on the type of car she drives. She replies yes. I ask her to share an experience that has led to her conclusion. She explains:

Right now I have a twelve year old Mitsubishi Gallant, It's a black car, but the paint on the car has peeled off on the back of the trunk and part of the roof and it looks speckled like a black and white car. It makes the car look beat up. But it's a good car. People see me in that car and make judgments that I am poor, and in an economically low social class, otherwise I wouldn't be driving in such a low end car. If you pull up at a stop light, and someone is next to you in a Mercedes, they look at you in your car and you can tell by their facial expression that they are *so* not digging you. I thought for a long time it was because of my skin color, but people of my own skin color do the same thing when they drive fancy cars. But the funny thing is people who are in cars more beat up than mine, they say "hi" to me.(Laughing)

In an earlier part of her interview she stated that the Lexus IS350 are driven by mothers and IS250s are driven by college students. Marcella's experiences of being acknowledged by consumers whose cars are in worse shape than her, is contrasted by her desire to not be associated with people who drive the Lexus IS350 and IS250. I ask her to explain why she doesn't like to be acknowledged by mothers who drive the Lexus IS350, but doesn't mind being acknowledged by a Mexican driver, whose car is in worse shape than hers. In order to get at this feeling, the respondent was asked to place the Mexican driver in a Lexus IS250 or IS350 and talk about her response if she were to see them at a stop light or at a stop sign. She explains:

If I pull up at a stop sign and they look Mexican I don't care what they think because their car is more beat up than mine. But if a Mexican pulls up in a Mercedes I think they will judge me based on my car. These thoughts are real! I am not making this up. The sad part is it never really bothered me until I got into a different salary level. Up until I hit the six figure salary level, I didn't mind. I don't know. I just don't want people to..... No! I don't want people to think of me as just another statistic as a poor African, black- looking statistic. I want them to see me an upwardly mobile successful woman.

What is interesting about her comparison between a Mexican individual driving a car in worse shape than her own versus a Lexus, is that her need to be recognized is motivated by her salary level. She wants to be recognized as a six-figure professional woman who is upwardly mobile. Since she is in the market for a new car, her goal is to buy a car that will encourage others to recognize her as the “upwardly mobile successful woman”. This can be thought of as her central identity. The recognition motive occurs through social comparisons both with similar and different others, and is important to identity centrality due to its self-evaluative properties.

3.5.8. Consistency Motive

The *consistency motive* is defined as an individual’s motivation to maintain uniformity of identity across situation and time. Consumers are faced with many choices of brands in the marketplace and each brand represents something unique in the minds of the consumer. From brand positioning to brand attributes, these images conjure up corresponding images for the consumer. If a consumer perceives a direct parallel between the brand and their self-image, they are more likely to purchase it (Dolich 1969; Sirgy 1981; 1982). However, if the brand in some way conflicts with an individual’s self-image, the individual is more likely to bypass that brand for one that is more in line with their self-image. Marcella speaks in very specific terms of automobiles brands being representative of certain stereotypes. Below, she explains why none of the brands of cars are consistent with her self-image.

They (Lexus IS350) are not sporty. They look like someone who has a family of four. I want something that is sporty, that makes me look upwardly mobile and professional. Something that says I've made it. I'm single and I don't have a family. I don't want people to think that I am older person. You know, so what I do is.... while I am driving, I look at cars and I look at who is in them, and how the cars look, and pretty much everything except for the IS350 I see mature looking people in them, looking like they have kids. Lexus also has an IS250 but the people that I see in the 250 are like young "colleagey" kids. It's fast and sporty, but the young college kids are in them. But I don't want anyone to think... Let me correct myself, I don't want people to assume that I have kids. That's why I don't only want to buy that model. I also will not buy the IS250 because I don't want anyone to think that I am one of those "just trying to get my hands around life college kids". Does that sound kind of vain?

It is evident that Marcella's views are based strongly on her perceived user imagery of the two types of Lexus brands (IS350 and IS250). In one regard she doesn't want to be associated with older consumers who have families, but she wants to avoid association with young collegiate students. This is theorized and supported by other researchers who suggest user stereotypes do in fact shape non-user attitudes (Grub and Hupp 1968; Grub and Stern 1971; Chaplin and Roedder-John 2005). This comparison between the consumer and the brand image is conceptualized in Sirgy's (1982) Product-Image Congruity Theory, which states consumers are likely to form purchase intentions based on their need for self-esteem and self-consistency. Consistency is an important motive with regard to identity presentation. In any instance it informs an individuals' behavior, and in a consumption context, it informs brand choice.

3.5.9. Security Motive

The *security motive* is defined as the motivation of an individual to protect their overall self-concept from internal and external threats (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004). In particular, this motive addresses an individual's need for understanding experiences and outcomes that construct identity, including direct responses to identity threat. Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1999) proposed four types of social identity threat within groups. The first threat deals with categorization whereby individuals are categorized against their will. The second type of threat deals with socially categorized groups. Here a threat exists when the value of the in-group is undermined. The third type of threat is that which contests an individual's status as a good (or prototypical) member of the group. Lastly, the fourth type of threat addresses the distinctiveness of the in-group, and when information challenges the distinctiveness of the in-group compared with the out-group, high identifiers will feel threatened by any perceived similarity with the relevant out-group.

When a consumer is exposed to external threats (e.g. derogation, alienation), or internal threats (e.g. low self-esteem, lack of confidence) he/she will be motivated to protect their self-concept. This is achieved through certain behaviors that ensure the self-concept is expressed accurately and is shielded from external threats. In the case of Stefanie, when asked about brands comparable to A and F that she would consider wearing those brands, she replied:

Hollister is like more the middle-school aged children, and A and F is for high school kids and older... and Rule, well no one knows about Rule, and they only have a few stores, but no one knows about it.

So you would...well assuming that you can fit the clothes in Hollister. Would you wear them?

Yeah, I can fit them, but I really don't go in there because it's for high schoolers, but every now and then, I'll buy a t-shirt out of there.

Stefanie's desire not to go into the Hollister store because she views it as mostly for high school aged consumers is indicative of her attempting to protect her recent-college graduate identity. One could argue that her desire not to be associated with high-schoolers could be motivated by her need for distinctiveness versus security. However, the distinctiveness motive operates primarily within an individual's referenced ingroup (Brewer 1991). In Stefanie's case, high-schoolers would be an outgroup for her for two reasons. First, she is a recent college graduate and is looking forward to her first professional job. Second, the Hollister brand is positioned for high-schoolers aged 14-18; and the Abercrombie and Fitch brand is targeted at young people aged 18-22 (www.abercrombie.com/ourbrands.html).

The security motive deals with an individual's need to protect their overall self-concept including direct responses to identity threat (Branscombe et al. 1999). Given this, the security motive appears to be equally important for both identity preservation and presentation. This motive can in centrality as identities increase in importance to mitigate or ward off identity threat.

The nine identity motives presented above illustrate the various motivations that influence self-brand interactions and lead to identity centrality. The depth interviews

provide rich evidence of the highly contextual nature of identity motives. As these motives are satisfied, brand interactions are facilitated through the self-concept. The motives presented here are not meant to be an exhaustive list, but rather a formidable start of multiple identity motive research.

3.5.10. Identity Centrality

Individuals are motivated by multiple identities which each have their own level of significance in a consumption environment (Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993). Significance of identity is conceptualized as identity centrality, defined as the level of importance an individual assigns to a particular identity (Thoits 1986, Stryker and Serpe 1994). This construct was initially proposed in the social psychology literature (Strkyer and Serpe 1994). However its relevance to the marketing domain has yet to be explored. In this section, a case is made for the identity centrality in self-brand interactions. A consumer's identity is considered central when that specific identity is important to not only to one's global definition of the self but also dominates other identities in one's view of the brand. It is put forth that identity centrality will play a critical role in the brand considerations and the formation of associated attitudes and behaviors.

Identity centrality is posited to be driven by identity motives which are shaped by a consumer's ideal self in accordance with their higher-order identity goals (Breakwell 1983). As a brand primes a higher-order identity goal, corresponding identity motives are satisfied by brand images and/or associations, which in turns lead to identity centrality. One illustration of how identity centrality influences the choice of brands is shown through David, the contract firefighter in Iraq. When asked what will be the primary reason for the type of automobile he chooses, he explains his answers below:

(Researcher) So when you purchase your car, what is going to be the driving factor on why you purchase that car? Is it going to be the fact that you are a father, or the fact that you are a fireman?

(David) On whether I buy it, or...

(Researcher) The brand that you choose?

(David) It would be for quality, it will be umm probably for luxury, status.

(Researcher) Is that related to your black male identity?

(David) What the status symbol?

(Researcher) Yes. Or is it more related to your father identity?

(David) Well that's more of my black male identity not really my father, if that's the case then I would get a Volvo Station wagon. (laughing). It's a little bit of both all wrapped up. You know I can't say which one it would be.... Well the car will be more for status. So if I really wanted just straight up status, I would choose the Lexus, and if I was going for the responsible, competent father, then I'd choose the Volvo or the Honda.

David's various identities and roles are aligned with certain automobile brands. In one sense, he is focusing on the status of the car which corresponds to his overall self definition. On the other hand, he is talking about a more specific level of brand-identity congruence. His multiple identities are implicated in his explanation of why he would consider the Lexus (e.g. status), Volvo and Honda (e.g. responsible competent father) brands. This is supported by Settles (2004) who concludes central identities provide social validation and offer a framework for interpreting the world. Similarly, Thoits (1986) suggests that a central identity may also provide individuals with scripts (or

guides) for how to behave. In this case identity centrality guides the decision-making process.

3.5.11. Reference Group Brand Associations

Reference groups can serve to socially validate an individual's self-concept through social comparison (Folkes and Kiesler 1991), reference group members are a source of information for arriving at and evaluating an individual's beliefs about the world (Escalas and Bettman 2003). The congruency between group membership and brand usage (Bearden, Netemeyer, and Teel 1989, Moschis 1985) has been found to influence brand choice and self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005). However because reference groups can serve to socially validate an individual's self-concept through social comparison (Folkes and Kiesler 1991), reference group members are a source of information for arriving at and evaluating their beliefs about the world (Escalas and Bettman 2003). Informant, David talks about why he has a penchant for Escalades:

Just straight up me! Me being a black male, umm just, just strictly frontin'. But the fact that it will be a big enough vehicle for my family would be a plus, but that's not really what I am buying that for. I'm buying that for status. For a big, pretty vehicle that's it.

By placing his desire for an Escalade within the context of other black men, he is using reference group associations to associate himself with the Escalade brand. The brand association of black men is what comes to mind when he thinks of Escalades, and since he is also a black male, he feels as if the vehicle is congruent with his identity.

Another informant Marcella uses her girlfriends as her reference group. They not only influence her purchase of high end brands, but they also influence her concealment of low-end brands. I asked about another product category beyond automobiles that is

symbolic of who she is, and she replies that shoes are just as symbolic as automobiles.

She also goes on to express how she intentionally tells the name brand of her shoes to her girlfriends:

So I like designer shoes, but they don't all have to be designer, they just have to look cute. Sometimes I drop the name of the brand in front of my girlfriends like Minolo Blanick or Via Spiaga. Some of my friends think they're all that and they know fashion, so because they act that way, we always talk about what we have on. They say "oh this suit is Chinese Laundry", "this suit is Gucci", or "I just picked up this shirt from the Armani Exchange". When I get around them, I will let them know, that it is something expensive. So my friends who aren't that snooty, I will say I just got this at a bargain price, and I will tell them how much I paid for it. But with my snooty friends, I will always lie about the price and never tell the true price of it. And say that I bought it at another store, and never an outlet.

When asked if she would ever wear a pair of Payless shoes, she replies:

Yes. But only if they were really cute, I would never tell any of my friends, and I would never let them see the inside label cause' it will say Payless. And if we had to go somewhere to take off our shoes, I wouldn't take them off, I'd be too embarrassed. I can't have my friends thinking I shop at Payless.

Marcella's use of reference groups to both influence her choice of luxury brands and to conceal her use of bargain brands shows the magnitude of influence closely affiliated reference groups have on brand consumption. This is different than David's reference group, which was much broader, and the group was not as closely affiliated.

In this way, choosing a known brand helps individuals explain their actions to themselves and others. If the person's reference group is familiar with a brand and its associations, it may also indicate to others in the group that the individual has made a

good decision based on the brand's consistent image with both the individual and the group. Or as in Marcella's case, brand associations may also indicate to others in the group that the individual has made a poor decision, by selecting a brand inconsistent with the group.

3.5.12. Brand Symbolism

The symbolic associations of brands play an important role in shaping the self-concept. This is largely due to an individual's social identity and the brand image.

According to Levy (1986) individuals engage in symbolic behavior to boast consistency in their self-perception. This means that individuals will behave and consume in ways that suit their identity and enhance their self-esteem. Specifically, it means that symbolic consumption is the outcome of how a consumer interprets what is needed to support an identity (Levy 1986; Rook 2001). This is akin to identity commitment (Foote 1951).

When individuals encounter a brand, their reaction to it depends on its meaning to them; and its meaning depends on the brand associations (McCracken 1986), user imagery or prototypically (Keller 1993); and psychological benefits the brand may offer (Aaker 1991; Fournier 1998). From this perspective it can be implied that when individuals engage in symbolic consumption they are in fact establishing self-image congruency, which is defined as a matching between how an individual sees himself in relation to others and the brand image (Levy 1986). This congruency is posited to be based on an assortment of identity motives and meanings ascribed to the brand.

3.5.13. Self-Brand Connections

Brand associations are presumably more meaningful if they are linked to the self-concept (Escalas and Bettman 2003). This linkage is manifest through a self-brand

connection, defined as the extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (Escalas 2004; Escalas and Bettman 2000). Individuals use brands to create and communicate their self-concepts, and in the process create self-brand connections. It is posited that self-brand connections reveal a prominent part of the individual's self-concept and are based on an individual's central identity relevant to the brand. For David the firefighter, he stated that he would purchase the Escalade because that is the car that most black men drive, but he also goes on to say that that the Escalade is "strictly me". This statement exemplifies what self-brand connections are all about; the integration of a brand into one's self-concept. In the case of strong self-brand connections, the individuals begin to define who they are in terms of the brand, "I am a Coach woman".

3.6. Conceptual Framework

The proposed model was derived from the interview findings and consideration of the Identity Process Theory (Breakwell 1986; 1993). It is posited that brand associations aid in identity presentation and are more meaningful if they are linked to the self (Escalas and Bettman 2003). This linkage is manifest through self-brand connections, defined as the extent to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005). Thus it is posited that self-brand connections reveal a prominent part of the individual's self-concept and are based on an individual's central identity relevant to a brand.

As the model in Figure 3.3 shows, identity centrality mediates the formation of self-brand connections. The ability of a specific identity to become central by the satisfaction of multiple identity motives is posited to influence self-brand connections. Given the dynamic interaction of an individual's multiple identities, one might intuitively

expect that self-brand connections will be enhanced if a given identity is central to brand choice. This is due to the fact that individuals have multiple identities based on their traits, roles, and memberships in socially categorized groups (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004) with varying levels of importance. If an identity is not considered central to an individual's overall self-concept, then it is assumed that identity ranks low on the identity hierarchy. Thus it will not influence self-brand connections as much.

Form a process standpoint, not only is identity centrality posited to be driven by individual identity motives ($P_1 - P_9$), but it is proposed that identity centrality can further be driven by the simultaneous influence of multiple identity motives (P_{10}). Therefore it is predicted that consideration of the brand's image results in the activation of multiple identity motives allowing a central identity to dominate. It is also predicted that as these motives are satisfied, they will influence self-brand brand connections. Hence, identity centrality may serve as a mediator between the satisfaction of identity motives, brand choice, and related self-brand connections. The relationships between the constructs are further supported by the aforementioned informant responses and are integrated into a propositional inventory for future research (see Table 3.2.).

Figure 3.3
Conceptual Model of the Role of Identity Centrality in Self-Brand Connections

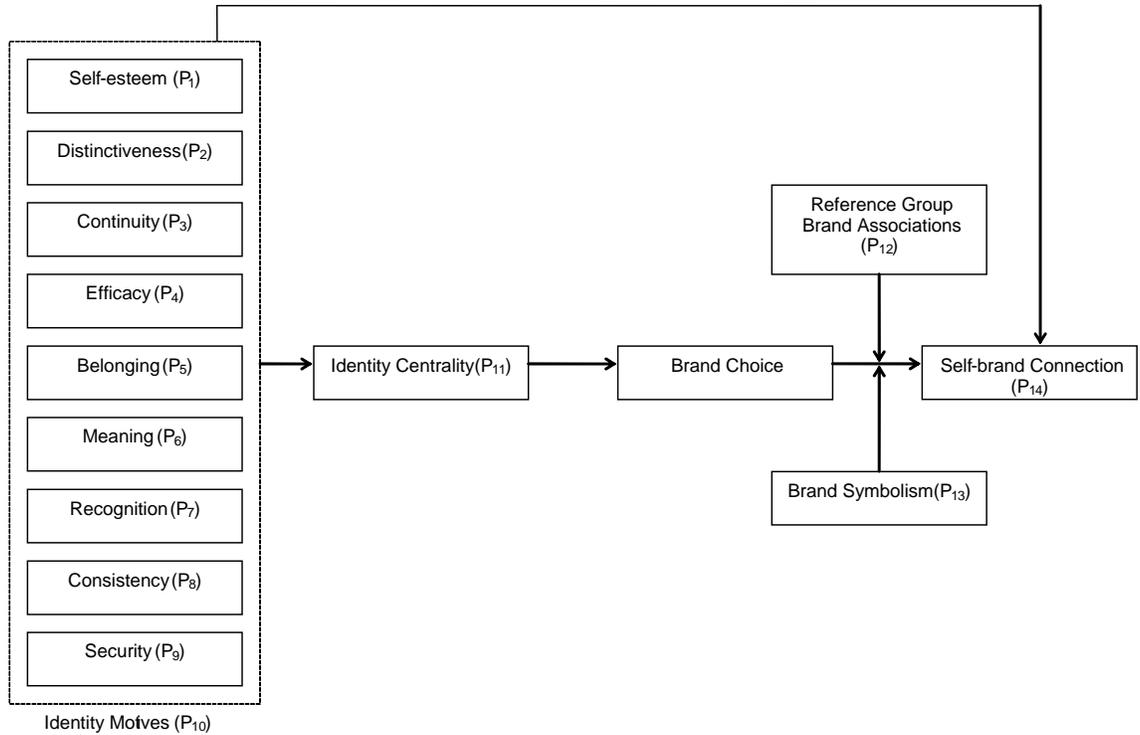


Table 3.5
Research Propositions for Figure 3.3

Number	Identity Motive/ Construct	Proposition
1	Self-esteem	The extent, to which a consumer is motivated to enhance their self-esteem, will influence identity centrality.
2	Distinctiveness	The extent, to which a consumer is motivated to maintain distinctiveness from others, will influence identity centrality.
3	Continuity	The extent, to which a consumer is motivated to establish continuity in his- or her self-concept, will influence identity centrality.
4	Self-Efficacy	The extent, to which a consumer is motivated to demonstrate efficacy in his- or her self-concept, will influence identity centrality.
5	Belonging	The extent, to which a consumer is motivated to meet their desire to belong to a reference group, will influence identity centrality.
6	Meaning	The extent, to which a consumer is motivated to establish meaning in their self-concept, will influence identity centrality.
7	Recognition	The extent to which a consumer is motivated to receive recognition from others, will influence identity centrality.
8	Consistency	The extent, to which a consumer is motivated to gain consistency in his or her self-concept, will influence identity centrality.
9	Security	The extent, to which a consumer is motivated to protect his or her self-concept, will influence identity centrality.
10	Multiple Motives	The extent, to which consumers are driven by multiple identity motives, will influence identity centrality.
11	Reference Group Associations	The extent to which a reference group identity is central will influence self-brand connections when brand associations are consistent with a reference group.
12	Brand Symbolism	The extent to which a brand has symbolic properties will moderate the relationship between identity centrality and self-brand connections, when brand associations are consistent with the reference group.

3.7. Discussion and Implications

The findings provide a starting point for understanding how self-brand interactions develop when multiple identities driven by the simultaneous influence of multiple motives influence brand consumption. The analysis of the informant responses suggests that consumers associate a future or current identity with a particular brand, because that brand not only satisfies multiple identity motives, but also allows the achievement and presentation of a desired self-image. By considering multiple motives and the isolation of consumer identities, marketers may be better informed to speak to the varied nature of today's consumers. This is important for marketing communications because oftentimes marketers target a specific market segment while overlooking the heterogeneity within the segment. If the segmented identity is not central for the consumer and a competing identity becomes central, then the communication becomes ineffective. By isolating the appropriate identity through centrality measures ineffective communications can be avoided.

From a theoretical perspective, the process of self-brand connections conforms to the Identity Process theory (Breakwell 1993) such that identity is constructed based on motivational principles (e.g. motives). As identity motives are satisfied through brand associations, the consumer is likely to incorporate the brand further into their self-concept. When the informants considered their self-concept in their consumption experiences, their brand choices were driven by the identity motives identified in this present study. Therefore, one important theoretical contribution of this research is the development of a conceptual framework to accommodate identity centrality in the formation of self-brand connections that builds from Breakwell's Identity Process theory,

and is supported by informant responses. By introducing Identity Process Theory in the consumer behavior research, research can be broadened to incorporate the management of multiple identities (through centrality) influencing consumption. Thus by combining the study of identity motives with centrality, the role of the self-concept in consumer behavior can be extended to accommodate the influence of multiple identities. This view of multiple identities is supported by the changing focus of self-concept literature in both consumer behavior and social psychology (see Chapter 2 for a review) from a unitary view of the self to a more dynamic and situational self.

3.8. Research Limitations and Future Research

The conceptual framework and findings of this research provide important managerial and theoretical insights into the centrality of identity in forming self-brand connections. Notwithstanding these insights, several limitations should be addressed. First, this study was limited to the participants featured in this study; therefore applying the framework to individuals from other cultures would prevent the generalization of this conceptual model. Certain motives may not be relevant in more collectivist cultures, where group behavior is emphasized over individual behavior. Second, caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions outside the scope of this research. These results are from consumers whose knowledge of brands and motivations for specific brands were assessed in a brief interview. Therefore generalizability may be limited.

Future research is warranted to address these limitations and expand the theoretical validity of the framework. One opportunity for future investigation that deserves further attention is the potential for conducting comparative multiple-case analyses. This could be a series of case studies exploring a variety of consumption

contexts assessing identity centrality within the same consumer over different time periods. These studies could provide insight into how self-brand connections actually form in cultures where brand exposure may be limited.

3.9. Chapter Summary

Though obviously exploratory in nature, these findings suggest the prominence of identity motives informing identity centrality. The goals of the research were two-fold: (1) to probe the existence of multiple identity motives in brand choice/consumption and (2) to propose a framework of identity-motivated consumption. Great potential in applying identity centrality to consumer behavior research was demonstrated and its use as a mediator in self-brand connections identified. A formal test of the conceptual model developed in this chapter forms the remaining two essays. In the next chapter, the simultaneous influence of multiple identity motives is tested using automobiles as the contextual setting.

Chapter 4
Essay 2-Multiple Motives, Multiple Selves: Why Self-Esteem and Self-Consistency Doesn't Fully Explain Self-Referent Consumption

In this chapter, the influence of multiple identity motives on identity centrality and self-brand connections was empirically tested. Using multiple regression, the results indicate motives of recognition and continuity were positive predictors of identity centrality; and the belonging and security motives were positive predictors of self-brand connections. Additionally, identity centrality was found to mediate the relationship between identity motives and self-brand connections.

4.1. Introduction

One of the least contested claims in marketing is that individuals are motivated to enhance their self-esteem and establish consistency in their self-concept when engaging in symbolic consumption (Levy 1959; Grub and Grathwohl 1967; Sirgy 1982; Levy 1986). However, less attention has been directed towards additional identity motives guiding self-brand interactions. Recently, in the social psychology literature, motives beyond self-esteem and self-consistency were found to aid in identity construction namely: efficacy, meaning, distinctiveness, and belonging (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Gollodge, and Scabini 2006). These alternative motives can provide a richer understanding of how and why individuals are motivated to engage in self-brand interactions.

Prior research has implicitly viewed the self as a stable construct (Sirgy 1982, 1985) focusing on a pre-established identity (Escalas and Bettman 2005) or multiple

identity elements within a single domain (Sirgy 1982; Sirgy 1985; Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg, Park, Chon, Claiborne, Johar, and Berkman 1997) weakening the external validity of their research findings. This is also true of the product image congruency theory (Grub and Grathwohl, 1967; Ericksen and Sirgy 1992; Kleine et al. 1993). Markus and Kunda (1986) put forth the term “malleable” (or working) self-concept, which refers to a host of self-conceptions (e.g. ideal self, perceived self, social self) that can be made accessible at a given moment. Each self leads to the presentation of different identities, providing social validation and a framework for interpreting the world through different scripts and serves as a guide for behavior (Thoits 1986). It is argued that multiple identity motives are associated with the importance of each identity.

Identity centrality, defined as the psychological importance an individual places on a given identity (Stryker and Serpe 1994; Settles 2004). Specifically, identity centrality reveals how a single identity is exacerbated while remaining identities are buffered. This process is akin to identity management, whereby each identity varies in importance to the overall self-definition influencing affective, behavioral and cognitive outcomes (Stets and Burke 2000). Because multiple identities operate through a process of identity centrality, and importance is almost always associated with some degree of motivation (Bagozzi, Bergami, Leone 2003), it is argued that as multiple identity motives are satisfied a given identity increases in centrality.

Taken together, the consideration of additional identity motives and identity centrality addresses the shortcomings of research on self-brand interactions. Based on the arguments presented above, the current study sought out to answer the following research

question: Which identity motives beyond self-esteem and self-consistency guide identity centrality and self-brand connections?

4.2. Theoretical Framework

Self definition has been viewed as the driver of consumption across decades of consumer behavior and psychology research (Levy 1959; Grub and Grathwohl 1967; McClelland 1951; Solomon 1983). Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan (1993) later confirmed this relationship by showing an individual's consumer behavior is stronger among specific roles than the global self. This finding is largely based on the symbolic meanings of products often linked to the personal images of the product-user (Sirgy et. al.1997). In this regard, consumption stimulates self-reflexive evaluation leading to identity maintenance and definition. But which identity is being maintained and defined? Multiple selves incorporate the self view as a dynamic structure and provides individuals with motives, self-relevant information, and goals needed to guide their behavior (Markus and Nurius 1986). Kleine et al. (1993, p. 210) argues for multidimensional self by stating: "The significance of a product to consumers depends on which of their ideas it enables and the importance of that identity – what it contributes to their overall sense of self". This is further supported by Rook (1987), who suggests that individuals consume products that allow them to support a given identity.

4.2.1. Identity Centrality

In studying the outcomes of consumers' relationships with brands, salience of a particular identity has been considered as a driver of consumer brand outcomes. This implies a shifting of self-categorization (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherell 1987) and reflects a momentary change in the self-concept that guides social perception

and behavior. Individuals repeatedly consume products, in part, to enact identities consistent with their ideal self (Huffman, Ratehswar, and Mick 2000), therefore it reasons that a single identity should become central in consumption activities. Consumers oftentimes encounter cross-situational scenarios that require an enduring cognitive prominence within their self-concept. This means individuals are inclined to perceive and act in accordance with a particular identity compared to others (Oakes 1987), thereby establishing centrality. Identity centrality is positively related to identity commitment, psychological well-being, and identity related performance (Settles 2004). This is supported by Martire, Stephens, and Townsend (2000) who found identity centrality buffers some identities and exacerbates others, due to the expectations surrounding each identity. Thus, the following hypothesis is offered:

H₁: Identity centrality will occur among an individual's multiple identities in a given product setting.

4.2.2. Identity Motives

Apart from self-esteem and self-consistency, little effort has been dedicated to exploring the range of motives influencing consumption of products and brands consistent with a consumer's image. In reviewing theories of the individual self-concept, social identity, identity threat, and general consumer behavior, nine key motives were identified and supported by a qualitative study (see Essay 1) suggesting individuals are motivated by: *self-esteem*, *distinctiveness*, *continuity*, *self-efficacy*, *belonging*, *meaning*, *recognition*, *consistency*, and *security*. They are inherently a function of an individual's overall self-concept and serve as "drivers" of identity construction. Each motive pulls together motivational assumptions and predictions regarding identity construction and

presentation from several theoretical perspectives. These motives are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
List of Identity Motives

Identity Motive	Definition	Application of Motive to Consumer Behavior Research
Self-Esteem	“The desire to maintain and enhance a positive conception of oneself” (Gecas, 1982, p. 20).	Smeesters and Mandel (2006); Bearden, Hardesty, and Rose (2001); Sirgy (1982)
Distinctiveness	The desire to establish and maintain a sense of differentiation from others.(Vignoles, Chrysochoou, and Breakwell 2000).	Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed (2002); Simonson and Nowlis (2000); Deshpande and Donthu (1986);
Continuity	“The desire to maintain a sense of connection across time and situation within identity” (Breakwell, 1983, p. 24).	Spangenberg and Sprott (2006); Tian and Belk (2005); Hamilton and Biehal (2005); Chaplin and Roedder John (2005); Agrawal and Maheswaran (2005)
Efficacy	“The desire to maintain and enhance feelings of competence and control” (Breakwell 1993, p. 205).	Erdem and Swait (2004); Keller 2006
Belonging	The desire to maintain or enhance feelings of closeness to, or acceptance by, other people, whether in dyadic relationships or within a group (Baumeister and Leary 1995).	Escalas and Bettman (2003; 2005)
Meaning	The need to find significance or purpose in one’s own existence (Baumeister 1991).	Ahuvia (2005); Baumgartner (2002); Wooten and Reed (2004); Reed (2004); Krishnamurthy and Sujana (1999); McCracken (1986)
Recognition	The need to be acknowledged or rewarded by others (Breakwell 1988).	Argo, Dahl, Manchanda (2005); Muniz and Schau (2004); Schau and Gilly (2003);
Consistency	The desire to establish congruency with the self-concept. (Sirgy 1982).	Sirgy (1982)
Security	The desire to protect the overall self-concept from internal and external threats (Branscombe et al. 1999)	Ashmore et al. (2004); Marques and Yzerbyt (1998)

4.2.3. Self-Esteem Motive

The *self-esteem motive* is defined as “the motivation to maintain and enhance a positive conception of oneself” (Gecas 1982, p. 20). This definition is similar to Sirgy’s (1982) definition, he defined self-esteem as the tendency to seek experiences that enhance an individual’s self-concept. Self-esteem is an element of Maslow’s (1954) motivational hierarchy and is often used as a superordinate goal in studying consumer motivation. For this reason it is sometimes viewed as a second-order construct, however, it is treated as a first-order construct in this study. The pursuit of self-esteem is recognized by researchers as one of the most important motivational drivers of consumer behavior and decision-making. This is because a consumers’ decisions are regularly made within the context of enhancing or protecting their self-esteem (Grub and Grathwohl 1967). Brendl, Chattopadhyay, Pelham, and Carvallo (2005) find self-esteem threat (i.e. negative feedback) increases the liking for one’s name letters, compared to the self-affirmation condition. Mick’s (1996) study on materialism and social desirability revealed a negative relationship between material values and self-esteem. The self-esteem motive is associated with a large number of identity process theories (for a review, cf. Hoyle 1999) and is implicated in intergroup relations.

4.2.4. Distinctiveness Motive

The *distinctiveness motive* refers to the desire to establish and maintain a sense of differentiation from others (Brewer 1991; Vignoles, Chryssochoou, and Breakwell 2000). Viewed as a core value of Western cultures, distinctiveness is also accepted as a universal human need necessary for a meaningful sense of identity (Vignoles, Chryssochoou, and Breakwell 2002). Marketers understand this need and oftentimes target consumers with a

host of stimuli activating their need for distinction. Research in consumer behavior clearly demonstrates individuals are motivated to achieve identity distinctiveness in a host of consumption settings. For example Deshpande and Donthu (1989) reveal high Hispanic identifiers are more likely to be brand loyal due to the distinctiveness of their ethnic identity in comparison to Caucasian consumers. Forehand, Deshpande, and Reed (2002) found that distinctiveness influenced participant judgments on a series of advertisements among Asian and Caucasian respondents. The *distinctiveness motive* is featured in the Uniqueness theory (Deci and Ryan 2000); Brewer's (1991) Optimal Distinctiveness theory; and the Identity Process Theory (Breakwell 1993).

4.2.5. Continuity Motive

The *continuity motive* refers to an individual's "motivation to maintain a sense of connection across time and situation" within identity (Breakwell 1988, p. 24). Continuity is not necessarily the absence of change as there is an identifiable conceptual thread uniting the past, present, and future within a person's identity (Breakwell 1988). James (1892) was one of the first to promote continuity as a chief feature of the identity. It is a strong motive that encourages permanence within an individual's past, present, and future. The continuity motive has implications for marketing across a number of domains, including gift-giving, fashion, and overall self-definition.

Lowrey, Otnes, Ruth (2004) found that traditional gifts can be filled with specific meaning allowing relational connections over time between the giver and the receiver. Individuals seek value expressive fashions which provide a sense of continuity to various memories, activities, and significant relationships (Murray 2002). Further, individuals seek or create social contexts which provide self-confirming feedback (Swann 1987,

Spangeberg and Sprott 2006) establishing subjective continuity. In contrast, when subjective continuity is allayed, negative affect ensues (Keller, Lipkus, and Rimer 2002) and a threat to identity arises (Wooten and Reed 2004; Dahl, Manchanda, and Argo 2001). The continuity motive is highlighted in the self-verification theory (Swann 1983); self-concept enhancing tactician theory (Sedikides and Strube 1997), as well as the identity process theory (Breakwell 1993).

4.2.6. Self-Efficacy Motive

Self-efficacy is defined as the tendency for an individual to maintain and enhance his/her feelings of “competence and control” (Bandura 1977; Breakwell 1993). As with previous identity motives, self-efficacy is theorized as a defining feature of identity (Codol 1981), and has been advanced as a primary human motivation (Deci and Ryan 2000). In the consumer behavior domain, the self-efficacy motive has been widely studied. Keller (2006) investigated self-efficacy on an individual’s willingness to perform a new health behavior depending on the role of regulatory focus. Whereas, Chandran and Morowitz (2005) examined the role of efficacy on participative pricing (i.e. auctions). Lastly, Duhachek (2005) found that a lack of self-efficacy is associated with consumer’s inability to evaluate information when depressed (Duhacheck 2005). This motive is found in theories such as the self-monitoring theory (Gangestad and Snyder 2000; Snyder 1974) and the Optimal Distinctiveness theory (1991).

4.2.7. Belonging Motive

The *belonging motive* is defined as the desire to maintain or enhance feelings of closeness to, or acceptance by other people, whether in dyadic relationships or within a group and is identified as a “fundamental human motivation” (Baumeister and Leary

(1995, p. 497). The belonging motive is oftentimes employed in studies of social influences during consumption. In particular, this motive explains how reference groups contribute to the formation of consumer values, attitudes, and marketplace behavior (Bearden and Etzel 1982). Escalas and Bettman (2003, 2005) examine reference groups as a source of brand associations revealing stronger self-brand connections for brands used by member and aspiration groups. When a consumer's need to belong is threatened, it has been shown that they respond with various coping strategies including identification with more inclusive in-groups (Wooten and Reed 2004), self-stereotype (Brendl et al. 2005), and overestimating consensus for their own beliefs (Rose and Wood 2005). The belonging motive is featured in the Sociometer theory (Leary and Baumeister 2000), optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer 1991), and uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin 1980).

4.2.8. Meaning Motive

The *meaning motive* refers to the desire to find significance or purpose in one's own existence (Baumeister 1991) and within their possessions. Marketers have long considered an individual's search for meaning as critical in understanding consumer behavior. As the consumer becomes an active partner with the marketer in brand-meaning formation, brand meaning evolves over time and is assigned in ways that make the brand more meaningful to the customer. A consumer's search for meaning has been found to play an essential role in brand choice (Ng and Houston 2006), brand relationships (Fournier 1998), and their participation in brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Thus its applicability to consumer behavior is well-supported. The depiction of one's existence as meaningful is a principal attribute of psychological well-being

(McCracken 1986), self presentation (Schau and Gilly 2003), and narrative processing (Escalas 2003; 2004). These studies suggest individuals invest meaning into not only possessions, but also their identities. The desire for a meaningful identity is linked to self-affirmation theory (Steele 1988), Turner's (1985) self-categorization theory, and Hogg's (2000) uncertainty reduction principle.

4.2.9. Recognition Motive

The *recognition motive* is defined as the desire to be acknowledged or rewarded (Breakwell 1993). This acknowledgement can come in the form of benefits directly related to the individual's actual or aspired self concept and can increase the individual's attractiveness, power, and commitment to the brand. Recognition allows individuals to non-verbally communicate in the marketplace, while satisfying the need to be acknowledged. Belk, Bahn, and Mayer (1982) argue recognitions (subjective inferences) based on choice of consumption objects, and are one of the "strongest and most culturally universal phenomena inspired by consumer behavior" (p.4). Another way to view recognition is to consider it as a type of esteem that is derived from three activities: the mastery of one's environment, realization of one's abilities, and recognition from others with regard to those achievements. This is often associated with self-confidence, pride, creativity, and a strong sense of identity (Breakwell 1993).

On the surface, the recognition motive may appear to be synonymous with the self-esteem motive, but these motives inspire different self-definitional goals. For instance, recognition implies a desire to be acknowledged by others; whereas, self-esteem is driven by an evaluation of one's self-worth. Consumer research employing this motive has focused on brand legitimacy in gay communities (Kates 2004), uniqueness (Tian,

Bearden, and Hunter 2001), children's symbolic meaning (Belk, Mayer, and Driscoll 1984) and consumption symbolism (Belk, Bahn, and Mayer 1982). The recognition motive is featured in the optimal distinctiveness theory (Brewer 1991) and the uniqueness theory (Snyder and Fromkin 1980).

4.2.10. Consistency Motive

The *consistency motive* is defined as an individual's motivation to maintain uniformity of identity across situation and time (Sirgy 1982). Grub and Grathwohl (1967) were among the first to offer the self image/product-image congruity theory as a process explanation of self-referent consumption. These authors provided the foundation for a host of research in consumer behavior on the consistency motive.

It has also been shown that consumers have more extreme attitudes toward brands that help to express their identities compared to brands that do not aid in identity presentation (Aaker 1999). Meanwhile, other researchers have shown that product knowledge consistent with an individual's existing self-concept received more consideration, is better recalled, and is perceived as more reliable compared to when product knowledge is inconsistent with an individual's self-concept (Coulter, Price, and Feick 2003). Individuals also tend to commit to issues that help them express and achieve goals consistent with their self-view (Shavitt 1990; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982), form stronger self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005) and results in more favorable product evaluation (Sirgy 1985). Lastly, Moorman, Diehl, Brinberg, and Kidwell (2004) find subjective knowledge (i.e. perceived knowledge) affects the quality of consumers' choices by altering consumer's search location due to self-consistency.

This motive is found in the self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1987) and the product image-congruity theory (Grub and Grathwohl 1967).

4.2.11. Security Motive

The final motive of consideration is the *security motive*, defined as the motivation of an individual to protect their overall self-concept from internal and external threats (Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 2004). Identity threat is relevant to how consumers perceive themselves and others, by eliciting motivational states that lead to both individual and group level protection. Identity threat among poor migrant Turkish women has been studied by Üstüner and Holt (2007). They conceptualized a model of dominated acculturation to explain Turkish consumer culture. Argo, White, and Dahl (2006) examine factors of self-threat to demonstrate social comparison motivates individuals to lie. In addition, Tian and Belk (2005) examine workplace possessions and find symbolic possessions of future aspirations mitigate corporate identity threat in the event of a buyout. Lastly, Adkins and Ozanne (2005) investigated the low literate consumers' self-threat when interacting within the marketplace and their coping strategies when threatened. This motive is found in theories such as the self-completion theory (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982), Tesser's (1988) self-evaluation maintenance model, and Steele's (1988) self-affirmation theory.

It is recognized that other motives beyond those presented above can drive self-referent consumption. However, exploration of additional motives is left for future research.

Based on the arguments presented for each motive and support from the literature, these nine identity motives are hypothesized to influence identity centrality. Simply

stated, as identity motives are satisfied a given identity will be become more prominent leading to identity centrality. Thus the following hypotheses are offered:

- H₂**: Multiple identity motives will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2A}**: The self-esteem motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2B}**: The self-consistency motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2C}**: The distinctiveness motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2D}**: The continuity motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2E}**: The efficacy motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2F}**: The belonging motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2G}**: The meaning motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2H}**: The recognition motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.
- H_{2I}**: The security motive will positively and significantly influence identity centrality.

4.2.12. Self-Brand Connections

When brand associations are used to construct one's identity or to communicate one's self to others, a self-brand connection is formed (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005). Self brand connections measure the degree to which individuals have incorporated brands into their self-concept (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005). Presumably, self-brand connections will be enhanced as brands are chosen to achieve specific identity goals. This

is due to identity commitment, which is associated with expectations and motivations of behavior relevant to identity goals (Foote 1951). Identity commitment serves as a boundary criterion in determining how motivations from social influence will be handled. To illustrate, a person committed to the identity of "soccer mom" will interpret marketing stimuli differently than one committed to a "corporate executive" identity.

Similarly to the influence of multiple identity motives on identity centrality; the influence of multiple identity motives on self-brand connections is also considered. It is assumed that as identity motives are satisfied, self-brand connections should emerge stronger. Given the exploratory nature of this relationship and limited research on self-brand connections, it is unreasonable to dictate which motive will influence self-brand connections the greatest. Thus all nine identity motives are hypothesized to influence self-brand connections:

H₃: Multiple identity motives will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3A}: The self-esteem motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3B}: The self-consistency motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3C}: The distinctiveness motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3D}: The continuity motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3E}: The efficacy motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3F}: The belonging motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3G}: The meaning motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3H}: The recognition motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

H_{3I}: The security motive will positively and significantly influence self-brand connections.

An individual is likely to support and be more committed to preserving a particular identity when it is more central (Settles 2004). As stated earlier, centrality is influenced by multiple identity motives, which are related to a specific identity within the individual. Therefore a highly central identity should lead to stronger self-brand connections as various motives are satisfied. The key determinant of this proposed relationship is brand associations congruent with the self-image. Therefore the following hypothesis is offered:

H₄: Identity centrality will mediate the relationship between identity motives and self-brand connections.

4.2.13. Brand Symbolism

Levy (1959) asserts that individuals do not buy products simply for their functional value, but also for their symbolic meaning. Brands can be symbols whose meaning is used to create and define a consumer's self-concept. Brand symbolism enables consumers to form a long-lasting relationship with a particular brand through its emotional and functional utility. The emotional benefits of symbolic brands have been recognized by researchers as a prerequisite for sustaining brand success (Keller 1993). This is because consumers are able to communicate their identities through brand consumption. It follows that some brands are better able to communicate an identity better than others. For example, prior consumer research suggests that publicly consumed

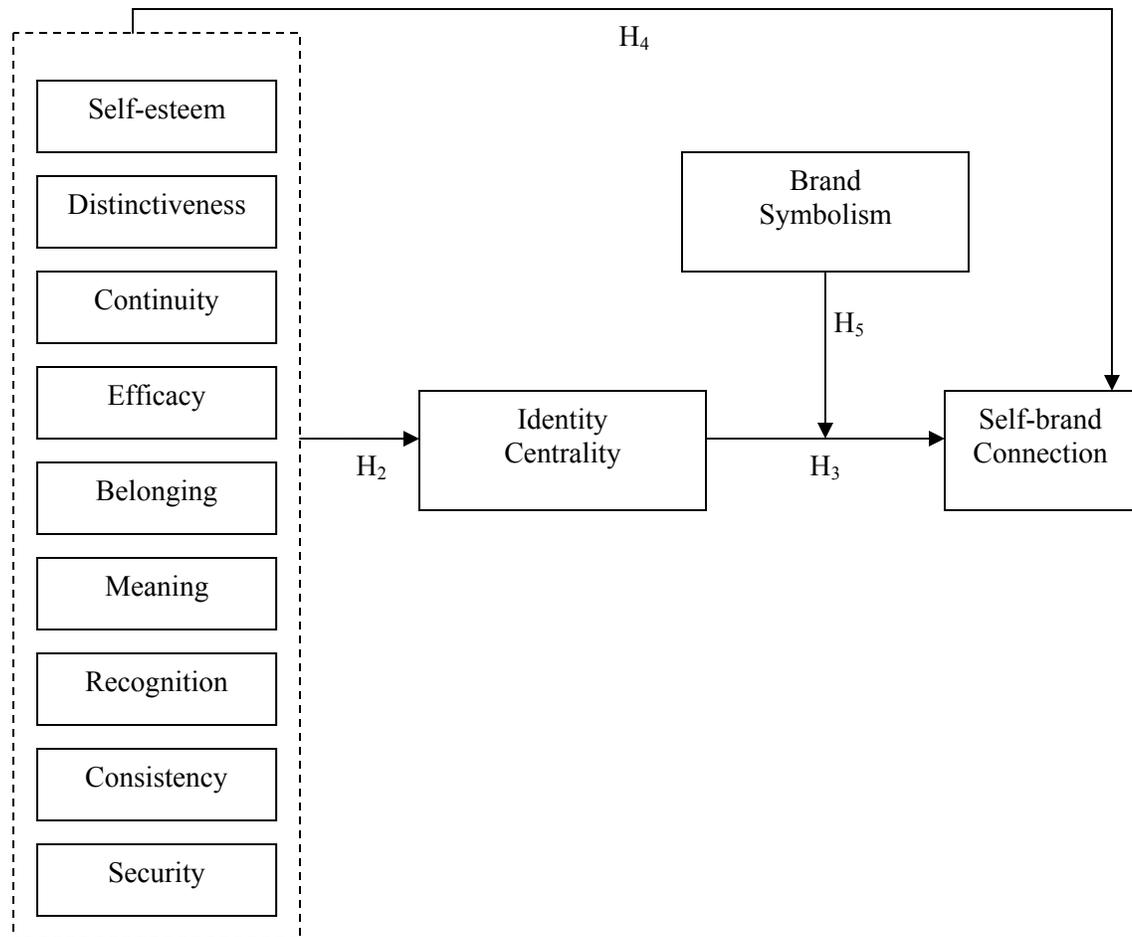
(vs. privately consumed) and luxury (vs. necessity) products are better able to convey symbolic meaning about an individual (Bearden and Etzel 1982).

A brand that is very popular and used by many different types of people (e.g., a BMW) may have different meanings to consumers based on the different identities that are presented through brand usage. It is expected brand symbolism will moderate the formation of self-brand connections due to the brands ability to communicate something about the individual. It is hypothesized that in cases when centrality is low, brand symbolism will be the primary source of self-brand connections. Thus it is expected that brand symbolism will moderate the effects of identity centrality on self-brand connections.

H₅: Brand symbolism will positively moderate the relationship between identity centrality and self-brand connections.

The theoretical model guiding this research is presented below in Figure 4.1

Figure 4.1
Conceptual Model of Identity Motives Influencing Identity Centrality and Self-Brand Connections



4.3 Methodology

The study was designed to test the influence of identity motivation, using the methodology developed by Vignoles et al. (2002). Participants freely generated a list of identities then rated each identity for its centrality (dependent variable) and for its association with motivations of self-esteem, distinctiveness, continuity, self-efficacy, belonging, meaning, recognition, consistency, and security (independent variables). The main analysis was designed to evaluate the unique contributions of each motive rating to

predictions to identity centrality, as shown in Figure 4.1. A secondary goal was to assess the unique contributions to predictions of perceived centrality and self-brand connections.

4.3.1 Determining the Study Context

Twenty eight student volunteers participated in a task to identify the appropriate context for this study. Participants were asked to list four product categories consumers use to reveal who they are to others. Each participant provided four product categories, for a total of 112 twelve independent responses. Among the 112 responses, a total of seven product categories were provided. Each category was rated for its frequency. If every participant ($n = 28$) indicated automobiles as the product category individuals use most to show who they are to others, then the automobile category was given a frequency count of 28. The same process was repeated for the other categories. Based on the frequency count of the automobile category, this category was chosen for the study context. Examples of other product categories include fashion, homes, electronics, jewelry, shoes, and handbags. Table 4.2 shows all the categories and the frequencies.

Table 4.2
Product Categories Frequency Count Distribution

Product Category	Actual Count
Automobiles	27
Clothes	20
Homes	18
Electronics	14
Jewelry	12
Shoes	11
Handbags	10

4.3.2 Participants

Participants were drawn from a convenience sample of MBA graduates. Approximately 512 invitations to participate in the online survey were disseminated. Two weeks after the initial invitation, an email reminder to non-respondents followed. The overall response rate was 17.38% (i.e., 89 questionnaires were returned). Approximately 14 participants attempted the survey but failed to complete it in its entirety; others opted not to participate in the study, leaving a total of 75 usable surveys.

The majority of participants were highly educated, 74 of them had an advanced degree, while 1 participant had some college, but had yet to receive a degree. Participants were 35% females and 65% males, 19% were single, 65% were married, and 16% were divorced. The sample was comprised of 73% Caucasians, 17% Asian or Pacific Islanders, 4% African Americans, 2% Hispanics, 1% Ukrainian, 1% Multiracial, and 2 participants left this question blank.

4.3.3. Non-Response Bias

Several methods have been proposed to account for non-response bias data in survey data collection including subjective estimates and extrapolation. The extrapolation method is used in this study to address bias between the respondents and non-respondents. A common method of extrapolation is the comparison of characteristics for respondents who answer successive waves of a survey (Pace 1939). A wave refers to the response following an invitation to participate in the survey and could refer to subsequent invitations to participate in the survey. There were two waves of data collected for this study. Subjects who responded in the later wave were assumed to have responded because of the additional stimulus and were expected to be similar to non-respondents.

This method is useful when a survey of non-respondents cannot be conducted, and a test for non-response bias assumes subjects who respond “less readily” are more like non-respondents. “Less readily” is defined as answering later or as requiring more prodding to answer (Armstrong and Overton 1977).

The extrapolation method tested for significant differences between early respondents and late respondents, with late respondents being considered a surrogate for non-respondents (Armstrong and Overton 1977). Using this method, responses of the first wave of received surveys were compared to the responses from the second wave of received surveys. All respondent characteristics were cross-tabulated between levels of each variable and mailing wave. A Chi-square test of independence was then applied. Results indicated there was not a significant difference between the responses collected during the first mailing and those collected during the second mailing. This result indicated that nonresponse bias is a minor concern. The distribution of the respondent characteristics for both the first and second wave of mailing is shown below in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3
Summary and Comparison of Characteristics of First Wave Respondents
to Second Wave Respondents

Variable	First Mailing <i>n</i> (%)	Second Mailing <i>n</i> (%)	Chi-square p-value
Employment Status			0.328
Employed full-time	50 (88)	30 (94)	
Employed part-time	4 (7)	1 (3)	
Currently Not Employed	3 (5)	1 (3)	
Gender			0.205
Male	37 (65)	20 (63)	
Female	20 (35)	12 (37)	
Age Category			0.254
18 to 25	0 (0)	1 (2)	
26 to 35	19 (33)	7 (22)	
36 to 45	24 (42)	17 (30)	
46 to 55	11 (19)	4 (13)	
56 to 69	2 (4)	2 (6)	
Over 70	1(2)	0 (0)	
Highest Degree Earned			0.148
Some College	0 (0)	1 (3)	
Graduate Degree	38 (67)	18 (56)	
Post-graduate Degree	19 (33)	13 (41)	

In addition to respondent characteristics, the key measures in the study were also tested for non-response bias. This comparison was completed by using a one-way ANOVA to compare the means of the key construct across the earlier and latter wave of respondents. The key dependent variable for this study was self-brand connection, and there was no significant difference between those who responded and earlier and those who were “less readily” to respond. The same results hold true for the identity centrality measure and the brand symbolism measure. Differences were tested on two identity motives (chosen at random), and once again the results reflect that there is no difference

in responses among the sample. The results of the comparisons are shown below in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4
Summary and Comparison of Key Study Measures of First Wave Respondents to Second Wave Respondents

	First Mailing Value (n)	Second Mailing Value (n)	ANOVA Results
Study Measures			
Self-brand Connections	63.10 (57)	63.25 (32)	F (1, 88) = .001, p< 0.974
Identity Centrality	4.94 (57)	4.62 (32)	F (1, 88) = 1.132, p< 0.291
Brand Symbolism	4.07 (57)	4.05 (32)	F (1, 88) = .835, p< 0.364
Self-esteem Motive	2.99 (57)	2.79 (32)	F (1, 88) = 2.412, p< .121
Meaning Motive	2.15 (57)	2.15 (32)	F (1, 88) = .001, p< 0.981

4.3.4. Procedure

Using a methodology developed by Vignoles et al. (2002) a questionnaire was design to capture an individual’s multiple identities and related motivations. Questionnaires were made available through an online survey website, Vovici, Inc. (<http://www.vovici.com>). The questionnaire began with a brief study introduction and an explanation of what is meant by term ‘identity’. Following the study introduction participants were asked to specify freely 6 identities that influenced their consumption decision in the marketplace using a shortened adapted version of the Twenty Statements Test (Kuhn and McPartland 1954). *“Now thinking about yourself, please list six term descriptors that you feel are relevant and accurately represent how you identify yourself when you are out shopping for different types of products and services”*. The participants were asked to provide only six identities as it was expected that participants would find

the subsequent motive ratings too demanding with six identities to rate on each identity motive. Of the 75 participants, 74 participants provided 6 identities.

Next participants explained how each identity influences their purchases, “*Now for each of your identities that you described above, please briefly explain how that specific identity might influence your marketplace shopping behavior*”. Each of their identities was then rated for its association with motivations of *self-esteem, distinctiveness, continuity, efficacy, belonging, meaning, recognition, consistency, and security*. The scale items were generated from the qualitative responses in essay 1, and began with the stem: “How much does your identity...?” Motives were measured on a scale from 1-6, with ‘1-Not at all’ and ‘6-Completely’ as the scale anchors. The scale items were averaged and divided the number of items to yield a standardized mean. All nine motives had acceptable reliabilities above 0.70, and showed unidimensionality The scale items for each motive along with coefficient of reliability are presented in Table 4.4.

Each motive was presented as a question at the top of each page with each identity positioned underneath. “*Now thinking about your identities you just entered, please respond to each of the following statements, using the response scale provided. “How much does your identity...?” (i.e., gives meaning to your life, influences your brand behavior?* This was repeated for all six identities recorded and each of the nine motives. The scale descriptors for the nine identity motives were anchored by 1- *Not at all*, and 7-*Completely*. Three questions measured the perceived centrality ($\alpha = 0.889$) for each identity, anchored by (1)-*Strongly Disagree* and (7)-*Strongly Agree*. “*I often think*

about being a(n) _____”. “Being a(n) _____ is an important part of myself image”.
“The fact I am a(n) _____ rarely enters my mind (reversed score)”

Following the rating of the nine identity motives, participants then completed the questions surrounding the automobile buying scenario:

“For the next several questions, we want you to place yourself in the following situation. You are given \$40,000 to purchase an automobile of your choice, but there is one specific stipulation. You can only use the \$40,000 towards the purchase of an automobile. No portion of these monies can be used for any other purchases. In the space provided, please type in the Make and Model of the automobile that you would purchase and best represents the type of person who you are”.

Once participants entered the make and model of their selected automobiles, they then rated the degree to which they have self-brand connections with the brand by answering seven questions ($\alpha = 0.87$). The scale was anchored by (1)- *Strongly Disagree* and (7) - *Strongly Agree*: “*This brand reflects who I am.*” “*I can identify with this brand.*” “*I feel a personal connection to this brand.*” “*I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people.*” “*I think this brand help me become the type of person I want to be.*” “*I consider this brand to be “me” (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).*” “*This brand suits me well.*” Participants then rated the degree of brand symbolism for the brand anchored by (1) - *Strongly Disagree* and (7) - *Strongly Agree*. “*This brand communicates something about my personality or identity.*” “*This brand symbolizes the kind of person, who drives it.*” “*This brand communicates who I am to other people.*” The three items were averaged to form one standardized score ($\alpha = 0.71$).

Following this, participants indicated which of their six identities carried the greatest importance in selecting their particular brand of automobile. *‘Now, thinking back to your role-identities (the identities they entered earlier appeared on the screen as the data was piped throughout the survey), please indicate the role-identity that was most influential in your selection of the “Make, Model”. If you feel there was some other role-identity that influenced your selection of the “Make, Model” please enter that role-identity descriptor in the space provided.*

Following that task, participants responded to three questions measuring the perceived centrality of identity³ on brand choice anchored by 1 – *Not at all* and 7- *Completely*: *‘How central is each of your identities to your choice of the “Make, Model” How important is each of your identities in influencing how you feel about the “Make, Model’?’ ‘How much do you see each of your identities as being an important reflection of who you are when you are driving a (n) “Make, Model’.* The three items were averaged to form one standardized score ($\alpha = 0.88$).

This was followed by the collection of demographic information. A debriefing statement was issued to all participants at the end of the survey. The entire procedure took approximately one half-hour.

4.4. Data Analysis and Results

4.4.1. Dependent Variables

Self-brand connections was measured using seven items (Escalas and Bettman 2003); averaged to form one standardized score ($\alpha = 0.87$). The mean was 62.79, with a standard deviation of 16.77.

³ In the computer program, participant’s answers were customized, so that their identity responses and brand of automobile was carried throughout the question stem of the measures.

4.4.2. Independent Variables

Exploratory factor analysis was (EFA) was used to check the dimensionality of the multi-item identity motive scales. Dimensionality is defined as the number of common factors or latent constructs needed to account for the correlation among the variables. The implicit assumption of EFA is that the researcher has a limited idea with respect to the dimensionality of the construct (Netemeyer, Bearden, Sharma 2003). The EFA factor loadings along with the descriptive statistics of the identity motives are presented below in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Identity Motives Descriptive Statistics and Coefficients of Reliability

Motive	Factor Loadings	Standard Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-Esteem ($\alpha = 0.87$)		4.44	1.112
Allows you to maintain a positive attitude towards yourself	0.81		
Contributes to your satisfaction with yourself	0.84		
Makes you feel like a person of worth	0.87		
Contributes to your overall self-esteem	0.89		
Distinctiveness ($\alpha = 0.89$)		3.83	1.39
Contributes to your uniqueness	0.87		
Allows you to stand out among other people	0.93		
Distinguishes you from other people	0.92		
Continuity ($\alpha = 0.79$)		4.10	1.47
Relates to other aspects of your self	0.79		
Gives you a sense of continuity in your life between your past, present, and future	0.84		
Is associated with your self-concept in the future	0.76		
Provides a sense of uniformity in your life	0.75		
Self-Efficacy ($\alpha = 0.79$)		4.02	1.47
Contributes to your confidence in assessing the worth of an outcome or event	0.71		
Allows you to exercise control of events that affect your life	0.81		
Makes you feel capable of being successful	0.84		
Makes you feel effective doing the things you do	0.78		

Table 4.5 (Continued)

Motive	Factor Loadings	Standard Mean	Standard Deviation
Belonging ($\alpha = 0.79$)		3.73	1.46
Gives you a sense of “similarity” to other people	0.73		
Makes you feel as if you belong to a group of people	0.80		
Makes you feel close to other people who are similar to you	0.67		
Makes you feel accepted by others similar to you	0.72		
Determines how much you conform to other people similar to you	0.55		
Meaning ($\alpha = 0.80$)		4.48	1.23
Adds a sense of importance to your life	0.82		
Gives “meaning” to your life	0.87		
Give significance to your life	0.75		
Gives you a sense of fulfillment/satisfaction with life	0.76		
Recognition ($\alpha = 0.91$)		3.61	1.46
Contributes to your desired level of respect	0.90		
Contributes to you need for acknowledgement	0.90		
Gives you a sense of appreciation	0.72		
Makes you feel admired by other people	0.87		
Makes you feel recognized by other people	0.92		
Consistency ($\alpha = 0.78$)		4.61	1.15
Provides “stability” to who you are	0.76		
Gives “consistency” to who you are	0.82		
“Brings together” who you are as a person	0.70		
Aligns with other aspects of overall self-concept	0.82		
Security ($\alpha = 0.86$)		4.31	1.41
Makes you feel secure with your self-concept	0.87		
Makes your feel confident with your self-concept	0.91		
Makes you feel self-assured	0.88		

Identity Centrality was measured using four items; averaged to form one standardized score ($\alpha = 0.88$). The mean was 3.43, with a standard deviation of 1.07.

Brand Symbolism was measured using two items; averaged to form one standardized

score ($\alpha = 0.71$). The mean was 2.40, with a standard deviation of 1.03. A correlation of the nine identity motives along with identity centrality is presented below in Table 4.6

Table 4.6
Correlations Between Ratings of Consumer Identities for Identity Centrality and Each Hypothesized Identity Motive

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Distinctiveness	1.00										
2. Consistency	0.43	1.00									
3. Continuity	0.46	0.77	1.00								
4. Belonging	0.43	0.57	0.55	1.00							
5. Security	0.62	0.81	0.79	0.67	1.00						
6. Recognition	0.69	0.63	0.61	0.56	0.84	1.00					
7. Meaning	0.52	0.59	0.57	0.30	0.62	0.67	1.00				
8. Self-Esteem	0.58	0.73	0.82	0.54	0.88	0.81	0.75	1.00			
9. Self-Efficacy	0.49	0.68	0.62	0.38	0.70	0.62	0.71	0.74	1.00		
10. Identity Centrality	0.22	0.33	0.33	0.19	0.30	0.24	0.28	0.31	0.29	1.00	
11. Self-brand Connections	0.53	0.47	0.47	0.31	0.55	0.50	0.44	0.52	0.30	0.22	1.00

All correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.4.3. Satisfying the Assumptions of Multiple Regression

There are several assumptions the researcher must consider in using multiple regression, namely: linearity, multicollinearity, normality, and homoscedasticity.

Linearity concerns the assumed relationship between the X and Y variables are linearly related. A bivariate scatterplot of the variables of interest (e.g. multiple identity motives and identity centrality) will reveal if the linearity assumption is violated. If curvature in the relationships is evident, one may consider either transforming the variables or allowing for nonlinear components. None of the scatterplots revealed a non-linear relationship, so this assumption was met.

Multicollinearity occurs when two variables convey rough the same information. In this case, neither may contribute significantly to the model after the other one is

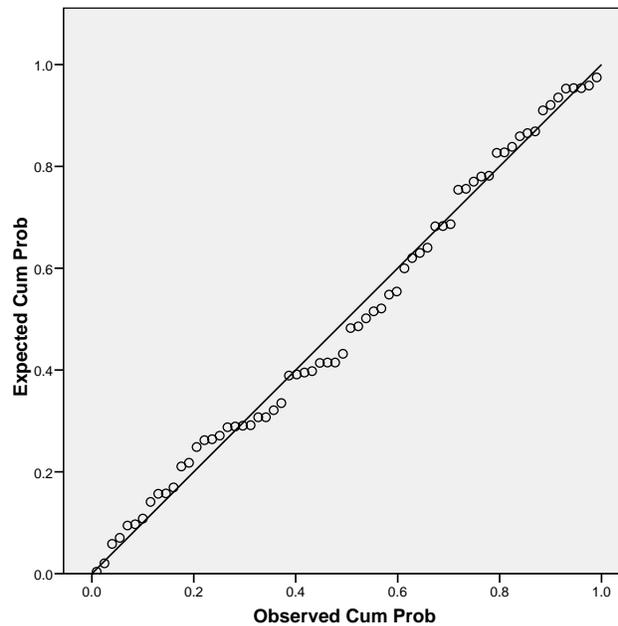
included. But together they contribute a lot. If both variables were removed from the model, the fit would be much worse. The correlations between identity motives are presented above in Table 4.6. Values of 0.8 and above indicate that there may be an issue of multicollinearity among certain pairs of motives (Cohen and Cohen 1983). As a back-up, the variance inflation factor is calculated in the regression models to ensure multicollinearity is not an issue in the regression models. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) is the number of times the variance of the corresponding parameter estimate is increased due to multicollinearity as compared to as it would be in the absence of multicollinearity. Values of VIF exceeding 10 are often regarded as indicating multicollinearity

Regression assumes that variables have normal distribution. When variables are skewed, or have substantial outliers, this can distort the relationships among the variables and significance testing. A violation of normality can compromise the estimation of coefficients and the calculation of confidence intervals. Because parameter estimation is based on the minimization of squared error, a few extreme observations can have a disproportionate influence on parameter estimates. Additionally, calculation of confidence intervals and various significance tests for coefficients are all based on the assumptions of normally distributed errors. If the error distribution is significantly non-normal, confidence intervals may be too wide or too narrow.

There are several ways to test this assumption such as a visual inspection of the data, histograms, skew, kurtosis, and P-P plots, while measures such as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests give an inferential statistic for normality (Osborne and Waters 2002). A way to test for normally distributed errors is a normal probability plot of the residuals.

This is a plot of the expected normal probabilities of occurrence versus the observed cumulative probabilities of occurrence of the standardized residuals. If the distribution is normal, the points on this plot should fall close to the diagonal line. Shown in Figure 4.2 below is a graph of the normally distributed residuals for self-brand connections.

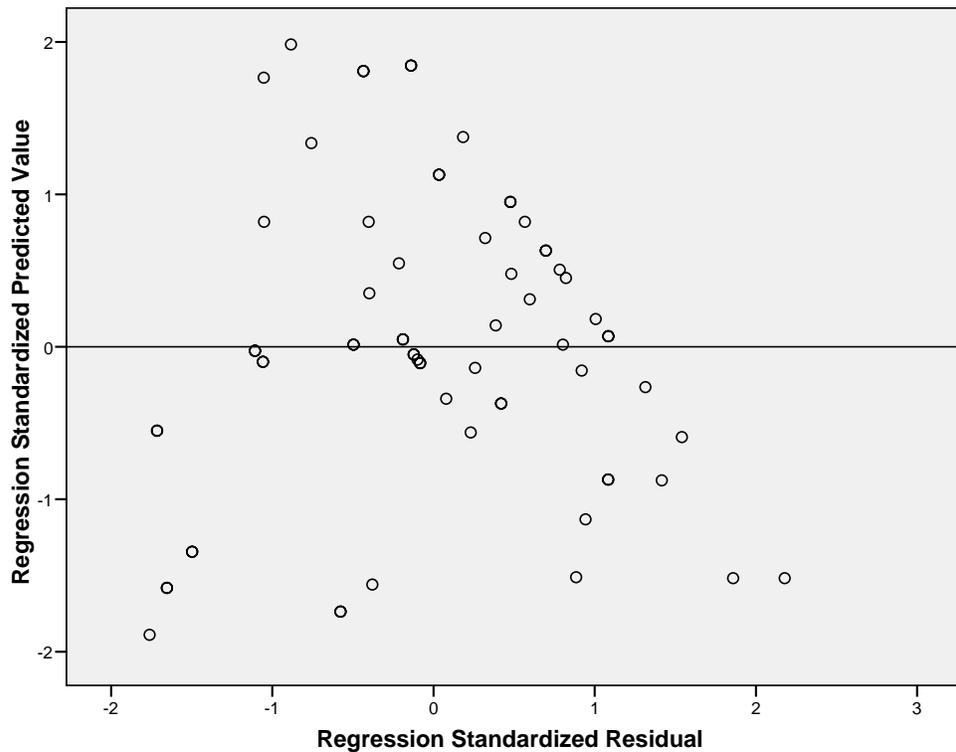
Figure 4.2
Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual for Self-Brand Connections



Lastly, homoscedasticity addresses the assumption that the variance of errors is all the same across all levels of the IV. A variance in different levels of the independent variable will lead to heteroscedasticity, however this condition is said to have little effect on tests of significance (Berry and Feldman 1985). This assumption can be checked by visual examination of a plot of the standardized errors by the regression standardized predicted value. Plot shapes such as a bow tie, or a fan is an indication of a violation of

this assumption. This assumption is met based on a plot of the errors as below in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3
Plot of Residuals Showing Homoscedasticity



Based on the above argument, the assumptions for multiple regression have been met. This allows the researcher to help avoid an increase in Type I and Type II errors, and increase effect sizes when violations of the assumptions are dealt with prior to analysis (Osborne and Waters (2002)).

4.4.4. Hypothesis 1

The primary aim of this study was to establish identity centrality among individual's multiple identities. Among the participants, 67 of the 75 respondents reported a central identity, while the remaining eight did not report a central identity. In

order to test hypothesis 1, the centrality measure for the identity influencing the automobile brand consumption was compared to the centrality measure for the remaining identities. There were 342 non-central identities reported and 69 central identities reported (two participants indicated two identities as central to their choice of automobile compared to the other participants who indicated one identity as being central). Individuals who declared a specific identity as central to the automobile product category rated that identity as more central $M_{\text{central}} = 4.89$ in comparison to the other identities provided $M_{\text{not_central}} = 3.24$. The two means were compared using an ANOVA for unequal sample sizes in SPSS. Comparison of the mean ratings between the identities were significantly different, $F(1, 411) = 89.369, p < .000$. Thus H_1 was supported. An example of the central identities provided by the participants is shown below in Table 4.7.

4.4.5. Hypothesis 2

This analysis focused on those identities reported as central to the automobile product category. Direct multiple regression was used to test this hypothesis. This method allows the variables to be entered into the model by the discretion of the researcher, providing assessment of the incremental predictive ability of any variable of interest (McQuarrie 1988).

Since prior research is limited on the role of identity motives in predicting identity centrality, all nine motives were entered into the model directly. The model was significant $F(1, 68) = 3.479, p < .002$ with 2 of the nine motives having a significant influence on identity centrality. The coefficient of determination, R^2 , was 0.347 and the adjusted R^2 value was 0.247 indicating that 25 per cent of identity centrality is explained by the nine motives of which *self-esteem* ($\beta = 0.625, t = 1.833, p < 0.072$) and *recognition*

motives ($\beta = -.517, t = -2.042, p < 0.046$) were partially significant and significant, respectively. Table 4.8 shows a summary of results for all nine motives.

Table 4.7
Examples of Consumer Identities Influencing Automobile Brand Choice

	Identities Influencing Consumption	Identities Central to Automobile Brands	Automobile Brand
Participant 1	A 33-Year-Old Man A Cool Guy A Good Looking Guy A Father A Smart Man An American	A cool guy	Jeep Wrangler
Participant 2	Father Practical Scientist Rational Thinker Soccer, Cricket And Tennis Fan Indian Classical Musician	Father	Mercedes 500SL
Participant 3	Father 36 Year Old Automobile Enthusiast Upper Middle Class 35+ Age Group Asian American	Automobile enthusiast	BMW 335I
Participant 4	Father Middle Age Single Business Executive Kids' Taxi Driver Music Listener Traveler	Business executive	BMW 528I
Participant 5	Hr Executive Corporate Coach Weekend Athlete Cool Aunt To My Niece and Nephew	Weekend athlete	BMW X5
Participant 6	Controller Father Husband Stock Market Technician Financial Analyst Military Supporter	Financial Analyst	Infiniti M35
Participant 7	Environmentalist Value Seeker Minimalist Down To Earth Negotiator Conservative	Environmentalist	Lexus GS Hybrid

A separate model was run with only *self-esteem* and *recognition motives* as predictors of identity centrality. The coefficient of determination, R^2 , was 0.254, and the adjusted R^2 value was 0.231 indicating that 23 per cent of identity centrality was explained by the *self-esteem* ($\beta = 0.805, t = 4.223, p < 0.001$) and *recognition motives* ($\beta = -0.440, t = -2.310, p < 0.024$). Thus H_2 was not supported, while H_{2A} was fully supported. Even though the standardized coefficient for the *recognition* motive was significant, H_{2H} was not supported due its negative value.

Table 4.8
Regression Results for Identity Motives Predicting Identity Centrality

Parameter	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	3.55				
Self-Esteem	0.62	1.83	0.07	0.10	10.46
Consistency	0.32	1.53	0.13	0.26	3.83
Meaning	-0.10	-0.50	0.62	0.29	3.44
Distinctiveness	0.02	0.15	0.88	0.48	2.10
Continuity	-0.16	-0.76	0.45	0.24	4.11
Security	-0.03	-0.09	0.93	0.08	12.29
Recognition	-0.52	-2.04	0.05	0.17	5.80
Belonging	0.11	0.73	0.47	0.52	1.92
Efficacy	0.25	1.42	0.16	0.35	2.86
$R^2 = 0.347$					
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.247$					
Model Fit $F(1, 68) = 3.479, p < .002$					

4.4.6 . Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 predicted multiple identity motives would influence self-brand connections. Similar to hypothesis 2, prior research is limited on the role of identity motives in the prediction of self-brand connections. Therefore all nine motives were entered into the model directly. The model was significant $F(1, 68) = 7.288, p < .000$ with 2 of the nine motives having a significant influence on self-brand connections. The

coefficient of determination, R^2 , was 0.526, and the adjusted R^2 value was 0.454 indicating that 45 per cent of the variance in self-brand connections is explained by the nine motives in which the *distinctiveness* ($\beta = 0.409$, $t = 3.147$, $p < 0.003$) and *efficacy* motives ($\beta = -0.483$, $t = -3.193$, $p < 0.02$) were both significant. Table 4.9 shows a summary of results for all nine motives.

A separate model was run with only the *distinctiveness* and *efficacy motives* as predictors of self-brand connections. The coefficient of determination, R^2 , was 0.337, and the adjusted R^2 value was 0.317 indicating that 32 percent of the variation in self-brand connections was explained by the distinctiveness motive ($\beta = 0.565$, $t = 4.838$, $p < 0.000$). The *efficacy* motive was insignificant ($\beta = -0.028$, $t = .243$, $p < 0.809$). Thus H_3 was not supported, while H_{3C} was fully supported.

Table 4.9
Regression Results for Identity Motives Predicting Self-Brand Connections

Parameter	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	35.47				
Self-Esteem	0.38	1.31	0.20	0.10	10.46
Consistency	0.25	1.40	0.17	0.26	3.83
Meaning	0.13	0.78	0.44	0.29	3.44
Distinctiveness	0.41	3.15	0.00	0.48	2.10
Continuity	0.00	-0.02	0.99	0.24	4.11
Security	0.10	0.32	0.75	0.08	12.29
Recognition	0.03	0.14	0.89	0.17	5.80
Belonging	-0.11	-0.84	0.40	0.52	1.92
Efficacy	-0.48	-3.19	0.00	0.35	2.86
$R^2 = 0.526$					
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.454$					
Model Fit $F(1, 68) = 7.288$, $p < .000$					

4.4.7. Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4 predicted that identity centrality would mediate the influence of multiple identity motives on self-brand connections. This hypothesis was tested by entering all nine motives along with identity centrality into the regression model. The results showed that the effects of identity centrality went away when all nine motives were entered into the model. Similar to hypothesis 3, among the nine motives, the *distinctiveness* ($\beta = .408, t = 3.116, p < 0.003$) and *efficacy* ($\beta = -.499, t = -3.223, p < 0.002$) motives were the only significant predictors of self-brand connections; suppressing influence of identity centrality was not supported. Therefore identity centrality does not mediate multiple identity motive influence on self-brand connections. Thus H₄ is not supported. The results of the mediation analysis are shown below in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10
Regression Results for Identity Centrality Mediation

Parameter	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	32.06				
Self-Esteem	0.34	1.14	0.26	0.09	11.06
Consistency	0.23	1.26	0.22	0.25	3.98
Meaning	0.14	0.81	0.42	0.29	3.46
Distinctiveness	0.41	3.12	0.00	0.48	2.11
Continuity	0.01	0.04	0.97	0.24	4.15
Security	0.10	0.33	0.75	0.08	12.29
Recognition	0.06	0.28	0.78	0.16	6.21
Belonging	-0.11	-0.89	0.38	0.52	1.94
Efficacy	-0.50	-3.22	0.00	0.34	2.95
Identity Centrality	0.62	0.56	0.58	0.65	1.53
R ² = 0.529					
Adjusted R ² = 0.484					
Model Fit F(1, 68) = 6.513, p < .000					

4.4.8. Hypothesis 5

Hypothesis 5 predicted brand symbolism will moderate the effect of identity centrality on self-brand connections. In order to analyze this hypothesis, a moderated multiple regression was run on the data for all participants who specified a central identity. Moderated multiple regression involves hierarchical regression that first tests the relationship of the predictors of interest (e.g., identity centrality, brand symbolism) on the criterion variable (e.g. self-brand connections), and secondly tests the relationship of a term that carries information about both predictors (the interaction term). The overall model fit was significant $F(1, 68) = 33.161, p < .000$. However, only the main effect of brand symbolism was significant ($\beta = .0674, t = 2.087, p < 0.041$). The interaction term was insignificant, ($\beta = .161, t = 0.315, p < 0.754$). Thus H_5 was not supported. The results of the moderated regression model are shown below in Table 4.11.

Table 4.11
Moderated Regression Results for Self-Brand Connections

Parameter	β	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	12.31				
Identity Centrality	-0.08	-0.25	0.61	0.06	17.93
Brand Symbolism	0.67	2.09	0.80	0.06	17.15
Identity Centrality x Brand Symbolism	0.16	0.32	0.04	0.02	42.98
$R^2 = 0.605$					
Adjusted $R^2 = 0.587$					
Model Fit $F(1, 68) = 33.161, p < .000$					

4.5. Discussion

There are two arguments in this study that have been addressed: consumers assign importance to their identities and multiple identity motives beyond self-esteem and self-consistency guide self-brand interactions. These arguments were based on the relationship proposed in the Identity Process Theory which purports that identity motives lead to identity centrality. The findings reveal full support for H₁, and H₃, and partial support for H₂ and H₄. Hypotheses 2 and 4 were partially supported due to the limited influence of multiple identity motives.

This study failed to provide evidence of the joint influence of self-esteem and self-consistency impacting identity centrality. This is inconsistent with Grub and Grathwohl's Model of Consuming Behavior (1967) and Sirgy's (1982) Product-Image Congruity Theory. However self-esteem by itself influenced identity centrality in conjunction with recognition. Since self-esteem influenced identity centrality, it is safe to say that as brands are chosen to increase an individual's overall self-worth, then that brand is satisfying motives of self-esteem. In other words, the more participants rated an identity as satisfying feelings of self-esteem the more central that identity was to their selection of an automobile. Because self-consistency was not a significant predictor of identity centrality, it begs to question the limits of the product image congruity theory. Specifically one could ask, does the theory have boundary conditions within specific product categories? Or do alternate motives mask the motivation of self-consistency.

Overall, the results indicate individuals do in fact assign varying levels of importance to their identities in a consumption environment. The findings suggest centrality is a viable construct for understanding how individuals manage multiple

identities in consumption decisions. Participants rated as more central, those identities that provided a sense of self-esteem and that gained them recognition with regard to their automobile. With regard to the magnitude of influence towards centrality, the self-esteem ($\beta = 0.805$) motive had a greater influence in predicting centrality than recognition ($\beta = -0.440$). This suggests that the identity germane to automobile brand choice satisfied the participants' need for self-esteem a great deal more than it does for recognition. For a one unit increase in self-esteem, identity centrality would increase by .805 units, when the recognition motive is held constant. Conversely for a one unit increase in recognition, identity centrality would decrease by .440 units, when the self-esteem motive is held constant. Or stated differently, the self-esteem motive is the key identity driver of identity centrality for the automobile category among this population. Taken together, these motives seem to suggest individuals are motivated more so by internal self aspects (self-esteem) compared to other's acknowledgement of them (recognition). The results also suggest that if an individual's need for self-esteem is satisfied, then their motivation for recognition is mitigated in terms of which identity becomes central.

The model predicting the influence of multiple motives on self-brand connections showed that the distinctiveness ($\beta = 0.409$) and efficacy motives ($\beta = -0.483$) were the only significant identity motives. However when these two motives were regressed on self-brand connections independent of the other motives, the efficacy motive became insignificant. Thus it appears that the efficacy motive was significant due to the associations of the other motives, and this effect went away when the other motives were removed from the model. Ultimately, the distinctiveness motive was the only significant predictor of self-brand connections. For this population a one unit increase in the

satisfaction of the distinctiveness motives leads to a 0.565 increase in self-brand connections. From an explanation standpoint, more information is needed to assess why the distinctiveness motive emerged as the only significant predictor of self-brand connections. Perhaps thought protocols and/or open-ended responses will be beneficial to understanding motive satisfaction.

A glance at the identities in Table 4.4 shows the frequency in which participants listed professional identities. It can be assumed that automobiles are oftentimes a source of differentiation within their social categories or otherwise. In essence, automobiles enable them to feel distinctive from others. As a result, they in turn integrate the brand into their self-concept. While the interpretation of this finding is limited to this population, it would be advantageous to look at a broader sample and see if this motive is the sole predictor of self-brand connections. It may also suggest that distinctiveness is such a strong motive, that it masks the effects of the other motives. More research is needed to make this statement, and analytical tools such as structural equation modeling should be employed to assess the relationship among the motives.

The mediation of identity centrality failed to show significance as hypothesized in H₄. If significant this would have indicated that identity centrality reduced the effects of multiple identity motives on self-brand connections. Because mediation is a causal process, it would have been a significant finding if identity centrality intervened between motive satisfaction and self-brand connections. This means that identity centrality would have been presumed to cause self-brand connections. However, since this did not occur, the significance of the *distinctiveness* and *efficacy* motives are of little value within an overall mediation model.

Importantly, it would not have been sufficient to correlate identity centrality with self-brand connections, because the two variables may have been correlated because they are both caused by predictor variable (s). This hypothesis, if found significant, would have offered a great deal of insight into the formation of self-brand connections. Specifically, because the self-brand connection literature is fairly new, it would have been a significant contribution to understanding the mechanism or process through which identity motives influence self-brand connections.

Symbolic benefits of brands operate through a signaling process in which what the brand says about the consumer is communicated to the consumer and to others (Helgeson and Supphellen 2004). This effect can be based on the image of a typical user of the brand and/or the personality of the brand itself. When combined with the psychological importance, an identity that is congruent with brand associations, but is also congruent with the typical user and/or brand personality, stronger connections to the brand are likely.

Brand symbolism as a moderator between identity centrality and self-brand connection was not evidenced from the findings. Perhaps this due to the fact that participants indicated high centrality ratings for more than one identity, which means the effects of identity centrality, may have been masked in the other identities that were not reported as central to the automobile product category. The solution to this is to isolate a central identity or have participants establish an “automobile-buying” identity. In this manner, the identities will be appropriately isolated, and the combination of brand symbolism and identity centrality should ultimately lead to stronger self-brand connections. A separate analysis of brand symbolism on self-brand connections revealed

that brand symbolism accounts for 60% of the variance in self-brand connections. Also for a one unit increase in brand symbolism yields a 0.77 increase in self-brand connections. This finding suggests that brand symbolism is a strong predictor of self-brand connections. Mindfully, it may be appropriate to consider brand symbolism as a mediator of self-brand connections instead of identity centrality. This potential interactive effect between brand symbolism and identity centrality is worth exploring further, but care must be given to ensure identity centrality is being accounted for accurately for a specific identity.

In the regression models predicting the influence of multiple motives identity centrality (H₂) and self-brand connections (H₄), not all identity motives were significant. There are several explanations for this outcome, namely the identity motives of the population surveyed and the size of the sample.

Beyond the motives that have been widely accepted in the literature, there is little support for the influence of the typology of motives presented in the automobile category. Therefore it is hard to surmise why most of these motives were insignificant on the dependent variables. One explanation is that the population survey has similar motivations when it comes to purchasing an automobile, so it is likely that all nine motives would not be significant. Or similarly, their motivations are so similar such that the two motives that were found to be significant accurately capture the desires of this population. Even if that were true, other motives should emerge as influencing choice of automobile such as efficacy, because automobiles are high-involvement products. Or perhaps, distinctiveness, most automobiles are now customizable, and that feature can “speak” to the identity needs of individuals who are in the market for an automobile that

differentiates them others. This is not to say that all identity motives should have emerged, but the expectation was that there would be multiple identity motives, and preferably other than self-esteem and self-consistency that influenced both identity centrality and self-brand connections.

Alternatively, the small number of respondents can be the reason why more motives were found to be insignificant. There was simply not enough power in the sample, so the effects did not emerge. While the assumptions of regression were not violated, the small sample size simply tapped into the effect that was hypothesized. More data should be collected so that there is significant power in the findings in order to draw substantive conclusions about the findings here.

In addition to the identity motives being insignificant, a few of the identity motives had negative regression coefficients. The regression coefficient is interpreted as the correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable (Cohen and Cohen 1983). Therefore, for identity centrality, the meaning, continuity, security all had negative, insignificant regression coefficients. However, recognition was a significant motive which had a negative regression coefficient. From a quantitative standpoint, this result implies that the recognition motive is negative correlated with identity centrality. This could be due to the recognition being a second order motive that is explained by a higher order motive such as self-esteem. Or perhaps identity centrality is motivated by internal self-considerations and recognition is an external self-consideration, causing the negative relationship.

With regard to self-brand connections, the continuity and belonging motives were insignificant negative motives. However efficacy was the only significant motive that

carried a negative coefficient. It is proposed that the efficacy motive is negatively related to self-brand connections to the competency related aspect of the motive. Self-brand connection is the degree to which an individual integrates a brand into their self-concept, and what this means is that the more an individual satisfies his or her need for efficacy, the weaker the self-brand connection. Perhaps this because efficacy is an extrinsic motive and it doesn't reflect positively on the innate nature of self-brand connections.

4.6. Managerial Implications

The identity centrality measure can serve several specific functions in during self-brand interactions. Incorporated into self-brand studies, identity centrality allows for consideration of a brand's symbolic properties consistent with the identity (or related motives) most central to the product category. This relationship is driven by the satisfaction of multiple identity motives as evidenced in this study. Given this, it is necessary for marketers to better understand the role of identity motivations for brands during the preference-development stage. In doing so, they will improve their understanding of the role of brands in the identity construction process. Particular attention should be paid to the changing influence of motives across the different phases of an individual's life cycle.

It is also useful for marketers and retailers to consider the situations and circumstances that encourage the prevalence of a particular identity motive. By crafting brand strategies and marketing communications around key motives, a central identity is likely to emerge. Since individuals are committed to identities that have higher levels of importance (Foote 1951), they are likely to engage in activities to support that identity.

For the marketer this means increased brand involvement, brand now becomes a part of the evoked set, and perhaps brand purchase.

4.7. Research Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this research provided important managerial and theoretical insights into the role of identity motives in establishing the centrality of identity. Notwithstanding these insights, several limitations should be addressed. First, this study was limited to the participants featured in this study. Therefore applying the results to a different population of consumers and in a different product category would prohibit the generalization of these findings. Second, caution must be exercised for the various identities identified in the automobile context, a measure was not taken to assess whether or not the participants actually owned their vehicle. This could have implications for the identity centrality and self-brand connections measures. In addition, this measure could reveal important insights as to the identities guiding their brand choice (actual vs. desired).

Future research is warranted to address these limitations and expand the theoretical validity of the findings. One opportunity for future investigation is the assessment of longitudinal motive ratings. This could be done through a survey taken at two points in time for a given consumption experience. By tracking identity centrality over time, the brand manager could consider whether his/her marketing actions are improving or deteriorating consumer self-brand interactions. Thus provide revealing how self-brand connections actually form in cultures where brand exposure may be limited.

Another consideration is other motives beyond what is presented in the present study. Potential motives include those associated with hedonic consumption, as well as motives associated with religious identity, social acceptance, and social emulation. Future

research is also needed to examine the identity motives predicting identity affect and enactment. Marketers are now trying to gain insight into how consumers form emotional attachment to brands, as evidenced by the 2007 MSI Conference committed to this topic. Consideration of the motives influencing identity enactment will allow managers to pinpoint which motives are responsible for changing consumption patterns. In this way targeted strategies can be designed to accommodate enacted identities, as they are guided by specific motives.

4.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter reported results of an exploratory empirical study investigating the ability of various identity motives in predicting identity centrality, enactment, and affect. The goals of the research were two-fold: (1) to empirically test the influence of multiple identity motives on identity centrality and (2) to examine the relationship between identity centrality and self-brand connections. Based on our findings, great potential lies in exploring motives beyond self-esteem and self-consistency. Evidence of these alternative motives was demonstrated and their use in self-brand interactions was identified. Generalizing the role of identity centrality beyond individual brand choice, the next chapter examines the role of identity centrality in group brand associations, and related self-brand connections.

Chapter 5

Essay 3-When the Ingroup Fails to Indicate Brand Meaning: Exploring the Role of Identity Centrality in Self-Brand Connections

In this chapter, the results from a quasi-experimental design study revealed that identity centrality was a positive moderator of the relationship between reference group brand associations and self-brand connections. This moderating influence led to a significant difference in self-brand connections between reference group members who rated their identity as low in centrality compared to those who rated their identity as high in centrality. Identity centrality did not significantly impact self-brand connections when self-construal and brand symbolism were taken into account.

5.1. Introduction

Self-brand connections are defined as the degree to which a consumer has incorporated the brand into their self-concept (Escalas and Bettman 2003, 2005). Escalas and Bettman (2005) found that brand associations consistent with an ingroup led to stronger self-brand connections compared to brand associations inconsistent with an ingroup. This is because brands become more meaningful the more closely they are linked to an individual's identity. But what happens to this relationship if another identity other than the ingroup identity is associated with the brand? Or how are self-brand connections influenced if the reference group is associated with multiple brands? This study seeks to address the former question by examining the nature of multiple identities in the formation of self-brand connections.

Markus and Kunda (1986) put forth the term “malleable” (or working) self-concept to refer to an individual’s various self-conceptions (e.g. ideal self, perceived self, social self) which function to provide an interpretative and evaluative context for the overall view of the self (Markus and Wurf 1987). To date the consideration of multiple selves has been omitted from research linking reference group influence to self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2005; Chaplin and Roedder-John 2005). This omission leads to questions surrounding the differential attitudes and cognitions within the perceived reference group. This is supported by literature in social psychology which suggests individuals assign a level of significance to their identities which directly impacts group driven attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions (Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge, and Scabini 2006; Settles 2004; Stryker and Serpe 1994). It is argued that because individuals possess multiple identities, an individual’s self-brand connection should be reflective of the identity that is most central to the brand. In simpler terms, if the brand is associated with a particular ingroup, then the ingroup identity should carry the most psychological importance in interactions with the brand.

Identity centrality, defined as the psychological importance one places on a given identity (Settles 2004) can aid in explaining how individuals negotiate multiple identities exacerbating one and buffering others. Identity centrality requires conscious awareness and is usually measured by asking individuals to rank different identities according to their importance (Rane and McBride 2000). Self-brand connections are likely to be enhanced when an ingroup identity is central to the brand compared to when it is not. This is due to the functioning of identity commitment, which is hypothesized to be associated with expectations of behavior relevant to identity goals (Foote 1951). It is

suggested that depending upon the centrality of the reference group identity, differential self-brand connections will result thus moderating the relationship found by Escalas and Bettman (2005). This research shows that the differential self-brand connections are due to the lack of value expressive influence by other reference group members when centrality is taken into consideration.

5.2. Theoretical Framework

At first glance social identity theory would seem to predict that members of a reference group should form strong self-brand connections for brands that are consistent with their ingroup as found by Escalas and Bettman (2005). However the case is made that when Social Identity Theory, Identity Theory and the personal identity are considered, identity interference may result.

5.2.1. Social Identity Theory vs. Identity Theory

Social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner 1985) suggests that individuals base their identities off of categories or groups; whereas, Identity theory (Stryker 1980) suggests individuals base their identity off of roles. A social group is defined as a set of individuals who view themselves as members of the same social category (Hogg and Abrams 1988). To illustrate the difference between the two identity theories, consider the identities of professor and student. First, professor and student are roles that are defined with the group (or organization) of a university, such that meanings and expectations are related to each of these roles. Similarly, professor and student are a social category that constitute ingroups and outgroups. This is significant because individuals will always occupy a role and belong to a group simultaneously (Stets and Burke 2000).

Other theorists have suggested that the person identity also competes with the role and social identity. This is primarily due to the hierarchy of self-categorization. The personal identity is the lowest level of self-categorization (Brewer 1991; Hogg and Abrams 1988) and refers to an individual's categorization of themselves as a unique entity, unique from other individuals. This identity is categorized based on idiosyncratic characteristics and addresses the self meanings that sustain the self as an individual (Stets and Burke 2000). To illustrate the difference between a role identity and a person identity: a masculine gender reflects a role identity versus "I am a competent person", which reflects a person identity. Within this context, the individual behaves in accordance with his or her personal goals and desires versus as a member of the group or category.

In some cases, it may be difficult to separate the role identity from the group identity from the person identity. This "blurring of identities" can potentially explain why reference group behavior may be different across members within the group. For instance, when the meanings and behaviors associated with a particular role conflict with that of the reference group, an individual may experience psychological tension (Settles 2004). In order to mitigate this tension, an individual may establish a level of importance with the reference group identity over the role identity (i.e. identity centrality). In contrast, the opposite can occur, where an individual will establish a higher level of importance for the role identity over the reference group identity. Either way, these identities are always relevant to and influential on cognitions, affect, and behavior (Stets and Burke 2000).

5.2.2. Reference Groups and Their Influence on Brand Meaning

Reference groups are defined as a person or group of people that significantly influence the behavior of an individual (Bearden and Etzel 1982) and can be an important source of brand meaning (Keller 1993; Escalas and Bettman 2005). They have two functions: a *normative* function that positions and enforces standards for the individual and a *comparative* function that serves as a point of comparison against which an individual evaluates himself and others (Kelley 1947; Cocanougher and Bruce 1971). Both functions are consistent with processes of self-categorization and social comparison mentioned in the social identity theory.

Building on the work of Kelley (1947), Bearden and Etzel (1982) suggest informational influence from the reference group occurs when in the face of uncertainty an individual searches for information and counts on sources with high credibility or experience in order to help make a decision. Utilitarian influence occurs when an individual acts according to the desires of the reference group in order to obtain a reward or to avoid punishment. Value-expressive influence is characterized by an individual's acceptance of certain external standpoints given the psychological need to associate with a person or group. This study limits its focus on value-expressive reference group influences characterized by the need for psychological association with a group either to resemble the group or due to a liking for the group.

It has been shown by previous researchers (Escalas and Bettman 2003; 2005) that if a reference group becomes associated with a particular brand, then the associations about the brand may be appropriated by consumers as they construct their self-identities. Similarly, individuals buy brands congruent with a reference group to enact their

reference group identity. Thus, identification with a reference group leads to a number of consequences, namely: 1) the choosing of activities congruent with salient aspects of their reference group identity and 2) positive evaluations of the group (Ashforth and Mael 1989). Similarly, individuals may avoid associations derived from groups to which they do not belong to maintain an accurate portrayal of their self-image. Thus, it is hypothesized:

H₁: Brand associations consistent with an ingroup (outgroup) will have a favorable (unfavorable) effect on self-brand connections, whereas brand associations inconsistent with an ingroup (outgroup) will have an unfavorable (favorable) effect on self-brand connections.

H₁ is a replication of Escalas and Bettman's (2005) H_{1A} and H_{1B}.

5.2.3. Identity Centrality and Reference Groups

According to Hyman (1942) individuals may employ several reference groups in order to evaluate different aspects of their self-image. Internal as well as external conflict may arise when expectations or beliefs conflict between these multiple reference groups. Bearden and Etzel (1982) suggest Hyman's (1942) Reference Group Concept provides a way to comprehend why many individuals do not behave like others in their particular social group.

Rosenberg (1979) views self components as varying in the degree to which they are central or peripheral parts of the self. Underlying this variation is the importance assigned to the identities from the perspective of the individual (Rosenberg 1979). Stryker (1980) argues that identities are arranged hierarchically according to their salience and centrality. An individual's identity becomes central according to its place in the identity hierarchy, along with the probability of it being invoked in a given situation.

Salience is the likelihood that a particular status, role, or identity will be evoked in a given situation in comparison to the likelihood that other statuses, roles, or identities might be evoked (Rane and McBride 2000; Stryker and Serpe 1994). Salience is not a part of one's consciousness but reflects only the probability that an identity will be enacted (Rane and McBride 2000). Centrality requires conscious awareness and reflects the importance an individual attaches to a given identity. Prolonged identity salience enhances its centrality and the degree to which it can be linked with other identities. The stronger the identity's centrality the more committed individuals will be to preserving and enhancing that identity (Settles 2004). Centrality and commitment influence the strength of an identity, how meaningful it is, and its potential is for shaping attitudes, values, and behaviors (Stryker and Serpe 1994).

By introducing identity centrality into the results indicated by Escalas and Bettman (2005), it is argued that self-brand connections will be moderated by their level of reference group centrality. Thus it would appear that individuals for whom the reference group identity is highly central are likely to have stronger self-brand connections, because they are supporting the uniform perceptions of the ingroup. In contrast, individuals who are not interested in supporting the uniform perceptions of the ingroup, or who may have other identity goals within the group (e.g. personal or role identity goals), are likely to have lower self-brand connections. Thus the following hypotheses are offered:

H_{1C}: When an ingroup identity is high in centrality, brand associations consistent (inconsistent) with an ingroup will lead to stronger (weaker) self-brand connections compared to when the ingroup identity is low in centrality.

H_{1D}: When an ingroup identity is high in centrality, brand associations consistent (inconsistent) with an outgroup will lead to weaker (stronger) self-brand connections compared to when the ingroup identity is low in centrality.

5.2.4. The Role of Self-Construal in Brand Associations

How consumers view themselves in relation to others requires placing self-brand connections within a self-development context. One of the major aims of this study is to show how varying levels of identity importance (e.g. centrality) aid in self-definitional goals. However identity centrality is related to identity importance within the self-hierarchy and fails to capture individual differences in self-definition. Self-construal, which is related to the overall view of the self, captures how an individual views him or her- self relative to others.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) differentiate between independent and interdependent self-construals. Self-construal is conceptualized as the constellation of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning an individual's sense of self in relation to others (Markus and Kitayama 1991; Singelis 1994). Individuals with independent self-construal see the self (i.e., the overall self) as stable and separate from the interpersonal context and value self-promotion, autonomy, assertiveness, and uniqueness. These individuals tend to focus on internal attributes such as one's own ability, intelligence, unique personality traits, goals, preferences, or attributes that they express in public and verify in private through social comparison. Their behavior is consistent with and reflects those internal beliefs and values (Markus and Kitayama 1991).

On the other hand, individuals with an interdependent self-construal perceive the self as more flexible and intertwined with the social context, and value fitting in and maintaining group harmony. Interdependent self-construal reflects a flexible, variable self

whose expression and experience of emotions are significantly shaped by a consideration of the reactions of others in the group (Markus and Kitayama 1991). They behave primarily in accordance with the anticipated expectations of others' social norms and emphasize the collective welfare and are concerned with the needs and goals of others.

Similar to Escalas and Bettman (2005) it is predicted that individuals who have an interdependent self-construal will form self-brand connections based on some shared aspect of themselves with the ingroup and will "be immune to outgroup brand associations" (p.380). Individuals who have an independent self-construal will be motivated to establish differentiation from the outgroup to "create a unique self-concept" (p.380) which should lead to lower self-brand connections. Replicating Escalas and Bettman (2005), it is hypothesized:

H_{2A}: Brand associations consistent with an outgroup will lead to lower self-brand connections for independent self-construals compared to interdependent self-construals.

It was hypothesized by Escalas and Bettman (2005) that independent individuals should "be immune to outgroup brand associations". However, an increase in centrality should prompt a desire towards establishing ingroup differentiation from the outgroup. This is because individuals are likely to display favoritism when an ingroup is central to their self-definition and when a given comparison is meaningful or the outcome is contestable (Tajfel and Turner 1979). Thus it is hypothesized:

H_{2B}: When an ingroup identity is high in centrality, brand associations consistent with an outgroup will lead to lower self-brand connections for interdependent self-construals compared to independent self-construals.

If an individual regards their ingroup identity as high in centrality then comparison to the outgroup will cause them to seek reinforcement from their ingroup. Thus when the ingroup identity is central, it is predicted that the independents will shift their focus of differentiation from the outgroup to the ingroup. Essentially there will be two competing forces: the need for ingroup affiliation and the need for ingroup differentiation. It is posited that identity centrality will cause ingroup affiliation needs to be stronger than outgroup differentiation needs, causing independents to form lower self-brand than interdependents.

H_{2c}: When an ingroup identity is high in centrality, brand associations consistent with an ingroup will lead to lower self-brand connections for independent self-construals compared to interdependent self-construals.

5.2.5. Brand Symbolism

A central thrust of this research is that consumers are influenced by reference group brand usage, and in part, construct their identities based on these associations. This is supported by Levy (1959) who asserts that individuals do not buy products simply for their functional value, but also for their symbolic meaning. Brand symbolism enables consumers to form a long-lasting relationship with a particular brand through the emotional and functional utility of the offering. The emotional benefits of symbolic brands have been recognized by marketers as a prerequisite for sustaining brand success (Keller 1993).

It follows that some brands are able to communicate an identity better than others. For example, prior consumer research suggests that publicly consumed (vs. privately consumed) and luxury (vs. necessity) products are better able to convey symbolic meaning about an individual (Aaker 1991). In addition, Aaker (1991) found that brands

that have personality traits similar to that of the consumer yield more favorable attitude towards the brand. It is expected that the degree to which a brand can communicate something about the consumer's identity will moderate the relationship between reference group brand associations and self-brand connections. Stronger effects are expected for more symbolic brands (i.e., those brands better able to communicate something about one's self-identity). In line with Escalas and Bettman (2005), the following hypotheses are offered:

H_{3A}: More symbolic brands will lead to stronger (weaker) self-brand connections brand associations consistent (inconsistent) with an ingroup compared to less symbolic brands.

H_{3B}: More symbolic brands will lead to weaker (stronger) self-brand connections brand associations consistent (inconsistent) with an outgroup compared to less symbolic brands.

If the ingroup identity is central, an individual will behave in a way that establishes congruity with others in the group. Once this occurs, assuming the more symbolic brands are able to communicate something about the ingroup, then self-brand connections should be higher for individuals who are regard the ingroup identity as central compared to those who perceive the ingroup as low in centrality.

Individuals who view the ingroup as central are committed to establishing congruity between the identity and behavior, thus outgroup brand associations will have an unfavorable impact on self-brand connections. Even if the brand consistent with the outgroup has associations that are positively related to the ingroup, the mere fact that it is associated with the outgroup will negatively impact self-brand connections for individuals who regard their ingroup as highly central. Assuming that brands inconsistent with the outgroup are able to communicate something about the ingroup, self-brand

connections should be higher for individuals who are low in centrality. Thus, the following hypotheses are offered:

H_{3C}: When an ingroup identity is high in centrality, more symbolic brands will lead to stronger (weaker) self-brand connections for brand associations consistent with an ingroup (outgroup) compared to when the ingroup identity is low in centrality.

H_{3D}: When an ingroup identity is high in centrality, more symbolic brands will lead to weaker (stronger) self-brand connections for brand associations inconsistent with an ingroup (outgroup) compared to when the ingroup identity is low in centrality.

5.3. Methodology

The influence of reference group brand associations on self-brand connections due to differences in identity centrality was explored. Specifically the goal was to understand the degree to which identity centrality shapes self-brand connections when reference groups brand associations are considered. Brand symbolism was also considered as it may have a stronger effect on self-brand connections than identity centrality when reference group images are inconsistent with the ingroup. This is due to a brand's ability to help communicate one's identity. A quasi-experimental approach was employed, based on a 2x2x2x2 mixed design with identity centrality (high vs. low) and self-construal (independent vs. interdependent) as between-subjects variables and group type (ingroup vs. outgroup) and brand image match (consistent vs. inconsistent) as within-subjects variables.

5.3.1. Participants

Three hundred and thirteen individuals participated in this study. The participant population was selected based on the desire for generalizability across consumer populations. Thus, it was the goal of the researcher to include both student and non-

student populations. As a result, there were two hundred and fifteen students who participated in this study from a large Southeastern university in exchange for additional course credit. Student participants were recruited through a Basic Marketing course. In addition, ninety-eight non-students participated in the study. They were contacted from an alumni mailing list and participated voluntarily. Data were collected using an online data collection website (<http://www.vovici.com>) as well as in a computer lab on campus. Forty-four participants had to be eliminated for entering improper or incomplete responses (e.g. listing organizations versus brands or listing the same brand twice), leaving a total of 269 participants.

Sixty-seven percent of participants fell into the 18-25 age category, and 33% of the participants fell into the 26-35, 26-42, 46-52, and 56-64 age categories. There were 147 females and 122 males. Seventy-seven percent of participants were single, 14% were married and 9% left this question blank. Sixty-seven percent had some college and had yet to earn a degree, and the remaining 33% had obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher.

All three hypotheses were tested among the student group and the non-student group. Support for these hypotheses is shown below in Table 5.1 Cell sizes are below the self-brand connection values.

Table 5.1
Hypothesis Testing for Student vs. Non-Student Population

		Student Population		Non-Student Population			
Group Type		Image Consistent	Image Inconsistent			Image Consistent	Image Inconsistent
H _{1A}	Ingroup	63.33 (n=198)	29.83 (n=198)	Supported	58.67 (n=71)	29.00 (n=71)	Supported
H _{1B}	Outgroup	31.50 (n=198)	46.33 (n=198)	Supported	27.57 (n=71)	55.00 (n=71)	Supported
H _{1C}	Ingroup	Low Centrality 55.50 (n=55)	High Centrality 66.50 (n=143)	Supported	Low Centrality 53.17 (n=31)	High Centrality 62.83 (n=40)	Supported
H _{2A}		Independent 33.17 (n=23)	Interdependent 24.50 (n=27)	Not Supported	Independent 28.83 (n=16)	Interdependent 24.83 (n=7)	Not Supported
H _{2B}		32.06 (n=15)	25.12 (n=20)	Not Supported	23.81 (n=12)	23.22 (n=4)	Supported
H _{3A}	Low Symbolism	47.17 (n=30)	33.17 (n=69)	Supported	44.67 (n=28)	31.83 (n=40)	Supported
	High Symbolism	72.03 (n=99)	26.66 (n=129)		67.67 (n=43)	25.20 (n=30)	
H _{3B}	Ingroup	Low Centrality 65.79 (n=30)	High Centrality 73.95 (n=99)	Supported	Low Centrality 59.79 (n=18)	High Centrality 73.334 (n=25)	Supported
	Outgroup	27.94 (n=30)	29.61 (n=99)	Not Supported	31.48 (n=18)	29.91 (n=25)	Not Supported
H _{3C}	Outgroup	Low Centrality 42.666752 (n=84)	Low Centrality 34.000068 (n=112)	Not Supported	Low Centrality 28.50057 (n=40)	Low Centrality 40.6748 (n=26)	Not Supported
		High Centrality 49.16765 (n=111)	High Centrality 28.16723 (n=86)	Supported	High Centrality 26.33386 (n=31)	High Centrality 63.0126 (n=45)	Supported

Note: The differences between means are in the hypothesized direction and significantly different at p<.005 if supported.

5.3.2. Procedure

The procedure was a replication of that used by Escalas and Bettman (2005).

Changes dealt with the order of measures and the incorporation of the identity centrality measure.

This study used a Visual Basic® program that allowed for the customization of the participants' responses. Similar to Escalas and Bettman (2005), the program began with a short study introduction and was followed by half of the subjects completing the Singelis (1994) independent and interdependent self-construal scales at the beginning of the study, while the remaining half of the subjects completed these scales at the end of the study. To facilitate this effort online, two versions of the instruments were designed. Participants received a link to complete only one version of the instrument. An equal number of invitations were sent out for both versions.

Afterwards participants entered a group to which they belonged (i.e., an ingroup), *“In the box below, we would like you to type in the name of a group that you belong to and feel a part of. You should feel you are this type of person and that you fit in with these people. This group should be a tightly knit group, consisting of individuals who are very similar to one another.”* Next they entered a group to which they did not belong (i.e., an outgroup) *“In this box, we would like you to type in the name of a group that you do NOT belong to and do not feel a part of. You should feel you are not this type of person and that you do not fit in with these people. This group should be a tightly knit group, consisting of individuals who are very similar to one another.”*

After each group, participants were asked to list one brand that was consistent with the group and one brand that was not. *“In the box below, we would like you to type in a brand that is consistent with the group that you belong to. This can be a brand that members of the group actually use or it can be a brand that shares the same image as the group. A brand is considered to be a name or symbol that distinguishes one seller's goods from another's.”* and *“Now, we would like you to type in a brand that is NOT consistent*

with the group you belong to. This can be a brand that members of the group would never use or it can be a brand that has the opposite image from the group.” Thus, each participant entered four brands, corresponding to four group-brand pairs: ingroup-brand matches, ingroup-brand does not match, outgroup-brand matches, and outgroup-brand does not match. Next, participants completed a series of measures indicating the degree to which they "fit" with each group, anchored by (1)-*Strongly disagree* (7)-*Strongly agree*. “*I consider myself to be this type of person.*” “*I belong to this group.*” and “*I fit in with this group of individuals.*” These three items were averaged for a standardized score ($\alpha = .883$). Then they were asked to rate the extent to which an association with each group type would communicate something positive or negative about them.

After a short, unrelated filler task designed to reduce potential demand effects, participants rated the degree to which they had self-brand connections (Escalas and Bettman 2003) with these four brands anchored by (0)-*Strongly disagree* to (100)-*Strongly agree*. “*This brand reflects who I am.*” “*I can identify with this brand.*” “*I feel a personal connection to this brand.*” “*I use this brand to communicate who I am to other people.*” “*I think this brand help me become the type of person I want to be.*” “*I consider this brand to be “me” (it reflects who I consider myself to be or the way that I want to present myself to others).*” “*This brand suits me well.*” A standardized score was created to form one self-brand connection score per participant per brand ($\alpha = 0.928$).

Then they were also asked to rate the brands on a number of dimensions, including the degree to which the brand was able to communicate something symbolic about the brand’s user using two prescribed 100-point scale items. “*To what extent does this brand communicate something specific about the person who uses it?*” anchored by

(0)- *Does not communicate a lot*, (100)-*Communicates a lot*, and “*How much does this brand symbolize what kind of person uses it?*” anchored by (0)-*Not at all symbolic*, (100)-*Highly symbolic*. These two items were averaged for a standardized score ($\alpha = .890$). After which participants answered measures regarding their level of centrality for their ingroup identity (their ingroup identity appeared on the screen within the question stem based on their earlier responses) anchored by (1)-*Strongly Disagree* and (7)-*Strongly Agree*. “*I often think about being a(n) _____ member*”. “*Being a(n) _____ member has little to do with how I feel about myself in general*”(reversed score). “*Being a(n) _____ member is an important part of myself image*”. “*The fact I am a(n) _____ member rarely enters my mind*” (reverse scored). “*The _____ group I belong to is an important reflection of who I am*”. “*Overall my _____ membership has very little to do with how I feel about myself. (reverse scored)*” “*The _____ group I belong to is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am*”(reverse scored). The degree of centrality of the participant’s ingroup identity was assessed using the standardized score of the seven items ($\alpha = .866$).

This was followed by the collection of demographic information. A debriefing statement was issued to all participants at the end of the survey. The entire procedure took approximately one half-hour.

As noted above, during the study each participant entered two groups, an ingroup and an outgroup. For each group, participants entered a brand consistent with the image of the group and a brand not consistent with the image of the group resulting in a set of four brands. The specific groups and brands are idiosyncratic to each participant and are not of interest in the analysis. The data are only sorted by group type (ingroup versus

outgroup) and brand image match (image matches versus image does not match) for analysis. A sample of ingroups and outgroups listed by the participants are shown below in Table 5.2

Table 5.2
Example of Reference Groups and Brands Listed by Participant

Participant Number	Type of Group	Group Listed	Brand with Associations Matching Group	Brand with Associations Not Matching Group
1	Ingroup	Conservatives	Jcrew	Quiksilver
	Outgroup	Rednecks	Wrangler	Ralph Lauren
2	Ingroup	Dog Lover	Land Rover	Corvette
	Outgroup	Sports Nut	Nike	Salvatore Ferragamo
3	Ingroup	Soccer Moms	Nordstrom's	Hot Topic
	Outgroup	Young singles	Abercrombie and Fitch	Ann Taylor
4	Ingroup	Busy Moms	Target	Harley Davidson
	Outgroup	Nascar Fans	Armor All	Ann Taylor
5	Ingroup	Socially Conscious	Wild Oats	General Motors
	Outgroup	Conservatives	Budweiser	REI

Participants completed the entire self-construal scale (Singelis 1994) for both independent ($\alpha = .777$) and interdependent ($\alpha = .738$) self-concepts. The scale is anchored by (1)-*Strongly Disagree* and (7)-*Strong Agree*. Based on a median split of scale scores, participants were divided into high and low groups for each self-construal type.

Participants were classified as being interdependent if they scored a 3.5 or higher on this

scale and scored less than a 3.5 on the independent scale. The reverse is true for those participants classified as independent; they scored a 3.5 or higher on the independent scale and below a 3.5 on the interdependent scale. Participants who were high in independent and low in interdependent were considered to be representative of the independent self-construal, while participants who were high in interdependence and low in independence were considered to be representative of the interdependent self-construal (Escalas and Bettman 2005; Mandel 2003). Participants who were high on both or low on both scales (e.g. scored a 3.5 or above) were eliminated from the dataset, leaving a total of 77 participants⁴. By construction, the interdependent participants scored significantly higher on the mean score of the interdependence items (4.98 vs. 2.97), $F(1,75) = 2.259, p < .027$ and significantly lower on the mean score of the independence items (5.147 vs. 3.28), $F(1,75) = -3.139, p < .003$ compared to the independent participants. Scale items are presented below in Table 5.3.

⁴ A similar result was found in Escalas and Bettman (2005). When the authors assigned individuals into self-construal groups, they had to eliminate 168 participants leaving 75 participants for the analysis, because they scored high on both self-construal types. In order to retain all individuals, they calculated a self-construal index, and ran the analysis both with and without the index scores. They found the results to be virtually identical in both analyses.

Table 5.3
Self-Construal Measures

Interdependent Self-Construal Items

1. I have respect for the authority figures with whom I interact.
2. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.
3. My happiness depends on the happiness of those around me.
4. I would offer my seat in a bus to my professor.
5. I respect people who are modest about themselves.
6. I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of the group I am in.
7. I often have the feeling that my relationships with others are more important than my own accomplishments.
8. I should take into consideration my parents' advice when making education/career plans.
9. It is important to me to respect decisions made by the group.
10. I will stay in a group if they need me, even when I'm not happy with the group.
11. If my brother or sister fails, I feel responsible.
12. Even when I strongly disagree with group members, I avoid an argument.

Independent Self-Construal Items

1. I'd rather say "No" directly, than risk being misunderstood.
2. Speaking up during class is not a problem for me.
3. Having a lively imagination is important to me.
4. I am comfortable with being singled out for praise or rewards.
5. I am the same person at home that I am at school.
6. Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.
7. I act the same way no matter who I am with.
8. I feel comfortable using someone's first name, soon after I meet them, even when they are much older than I am.
9. I prefer to be direct and forthright when dealing with people I've just met.
10. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.
11. My personal identity independent of others is, very important to me.
12. I value being in good health above everything.

5.4. Data Analysis and Results

To assess if the manipulation was successful, the degree to which the participant belonged to the ingroup and the outgroup he/she entered was assessed using the standardized score of three items ($\alpha = .883$). Participants regarded themselves as belonging to the ingroup, $M = 5.75$ significantly more than they felt they belonged to the outgroup, $M = 1.72$, $F(1,243) = 39.65$, $p < .000$. Thus the manipulation held for ingroup versus outgroup affiliations.

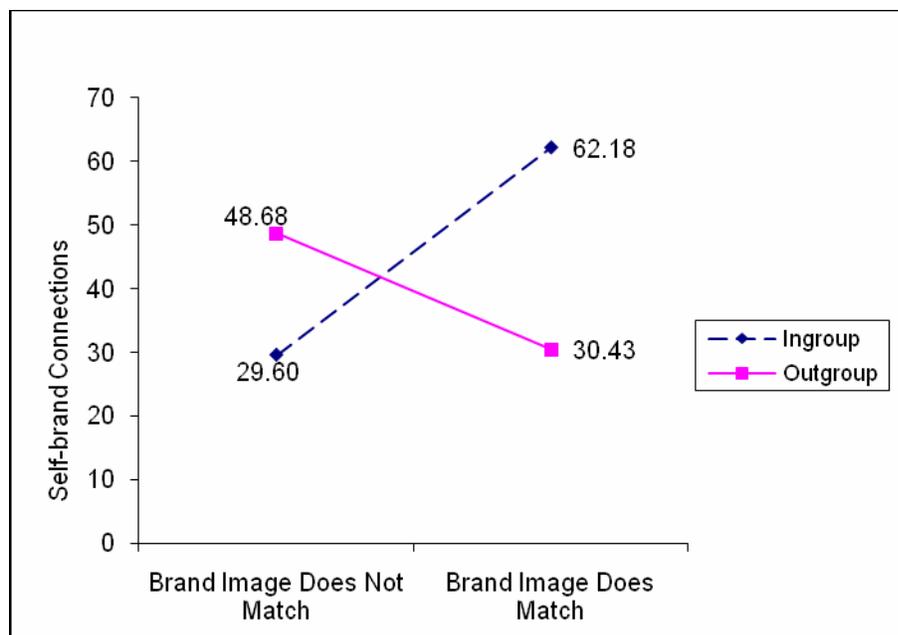
For purposes of analysis, participants were divided into two groups based on a median split of the identity centrality measure. Individuals were classified as being high in centrality if their standardized score was greater than 3.5, while those whose score was below 3.5 were classified into the low centrality group. One-hundred and eighty-two participants rated their ingroup identity as high in centrality, $M = 4.42$; while eighty-seven participants rated their ingroup identity as low in centrality, $M = 2.26$, $F(1,268) = 20.80$, $p < .0000$.

5.4.1. Hypothesis 1

H_{1A} and H_{1B} were assessed first. These hypotheses were a direct replication of Escalas and Bettman (2005)'s H_{1A} and H_{1B} which predicts a two-way interaction between group type and brand image match. It was expected that the perceived association between a reference group and a brand would have differential effects on self-brand connections depending on the group type. This hypothesis was tested using a univariate ANOVA with a priori contrast to see if the results could be replicated, and they were. A significant interaction of group type by brand image match on self-brand connections was found, $F(1, 1064) = 369.15$, $p < .0000$; see Figure 5.1. As predicted in Hypothesis 1A,

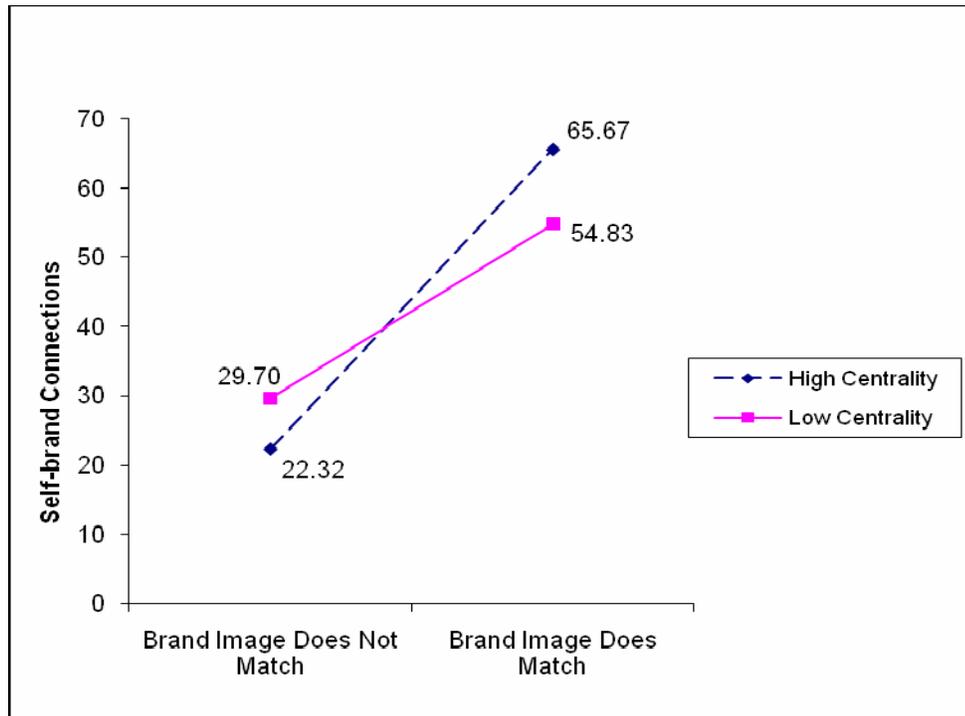
brands consistent with the image of the ingroup resulted in higher self-brand connections $M_{\text{consistent}} = 62.18$ than brands inconsistent with the group's image $M_{\text{inconsistent}} = 29.60$, $F(1, 269) = 19.794$, $p < .0000$. As suggested by Hypothesis 1B, brands consistent with the outgroup had less favorable self-brand connections $M_{\text{consistent}} = 30.43$, than those that did not match the image of the outgroup $M_{\text{inconsistent}} = 48.68$; $F(1, 269) = -9.304$, $p < .0000$. The results are consistent with the original authors' predictions in the directions hypothesized, thus H_{1A} and H_{1B} are supported.

Figure 5.1
Self-Brand Connections by Group Type by Brand Image Match



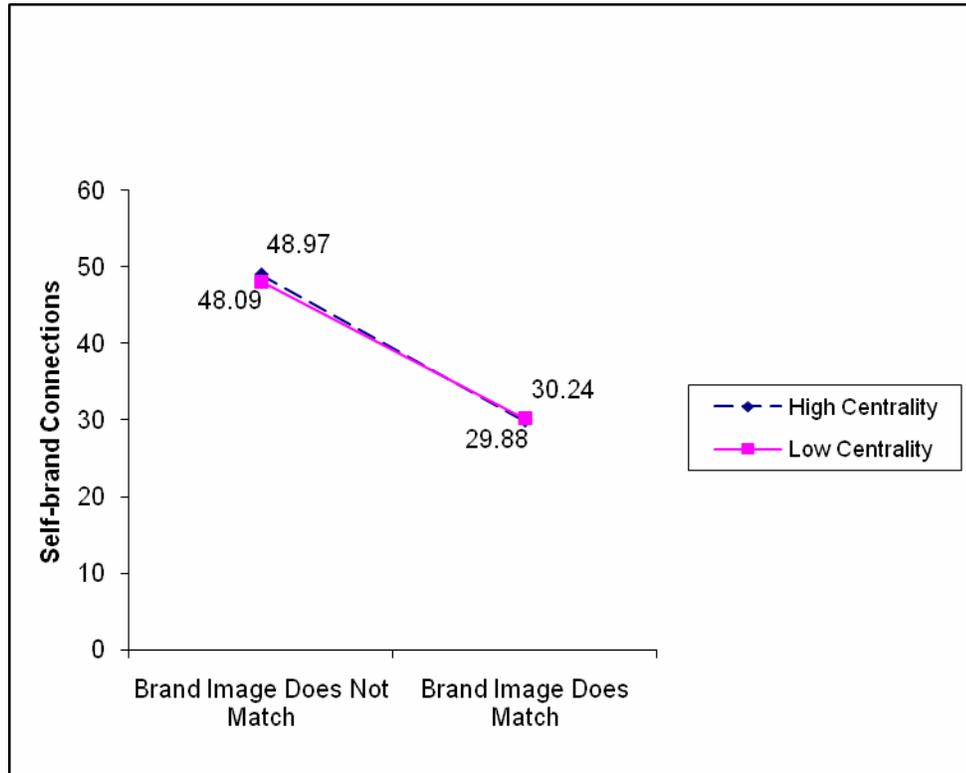
H_{1C} and H_{1D} and were assessed here. These hypotheses extended the prediction of Escalas and Bettman's (2005) H_{1A} and H_{1B} to include the moderating effects of identity centrality. Thus, predicting a three-way interaction between group type, brand image match, and identity centrality. When an individual's reference group identity is high in centrality and the brand image is consistent with the image of the ingroup, more favorable self-brand connections were expected than when the ingroup identity is low in centrality. A significant three-way interaction was found, $F(1, 1064) = 22.17, p < .0000$; see Figures 5.2 and 5.3. In the brand image does match condition, participants who reported their ingroup identity as being high in centrality reported higher self-brand connections $M_{high} = 65.68$ compared to those who reported their identity as being low in centrality, $M_{low} = 54.82, F(1, 268) = -4.202, p < .000$. In the brand image does not match condition, participants who reported their ingroup identity as being high in centrality reported lower self-brand connections $M_{high} = 22.32$ similar to those who reported their identity as being low in centrality, $M_{low} = 29.70, F(1, 268) = -3.693, p < .034$.

Figure 5.2
Ingroup Self-Brand Connections by Brand Image Match by Identity Centrality



Individuals who reported their ingroup identity as being highly central reported lower self-brand connections for images consistent with the outgroup, $M_{\text{high}} = 29.88$ compared to those who reported their identity as being low in centrality $M_{\text{low}} = 30.24$; $F(1, 268) = .132, p < .895$. In the outgroup brand image does not match condition, individuals who rated their ingroup identity as being high in centrality reported higher self-brand connections $M_{\text{high}} = 48.97$ compared to those individuals who rated their ingroup identity as low in centrality $M_{\text{low}} = 48.09$; $F(1, 268) = -.267, p < .790$. Thus H_{1C} is supported, while H_{1D} is not supported.

Figure 5.3
Outgroup Self-Brand Connections by Brand Image Match by Identity Centrality



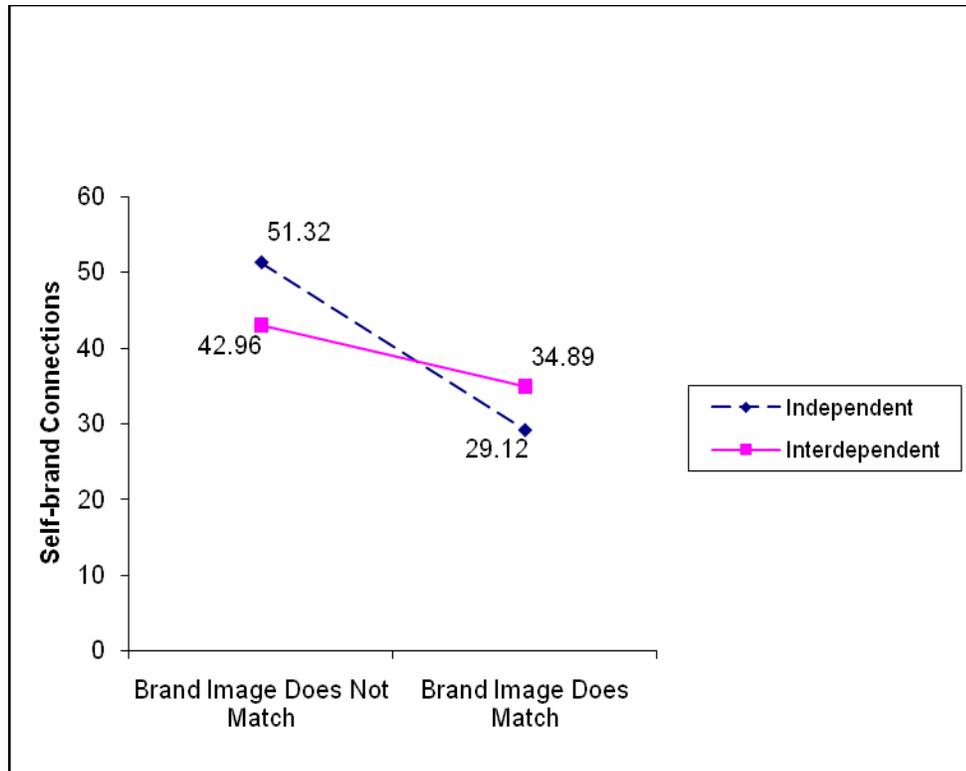
5.4.2. Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2A replicates H₂ from Escalas and Bettman (2005). It proposes that self-brand connections for brands with associations consistent with the outgroup will be lower for independent individuals compared to interdependent individuals. A significant three-way interaction was found, $F(1, 1064) = 4.973, p < .002$; see Figures 5.4 and 5.5.

The contrast comparing interdependent to independent self-construals found, $M_{\text{independent}} = 29.12, M_{\text{interdependent}} = 34.89; F(1,72) = 2.003, p < .049$. This finding is consistent with the results of Escalas and Bettman (2005). As it relates to the outgroup, significant differences were found between an independent, $M_{\text{independent}} = 51.32$ and interdependent $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 42.96$ individuals' self-brand connections in the brand image does not

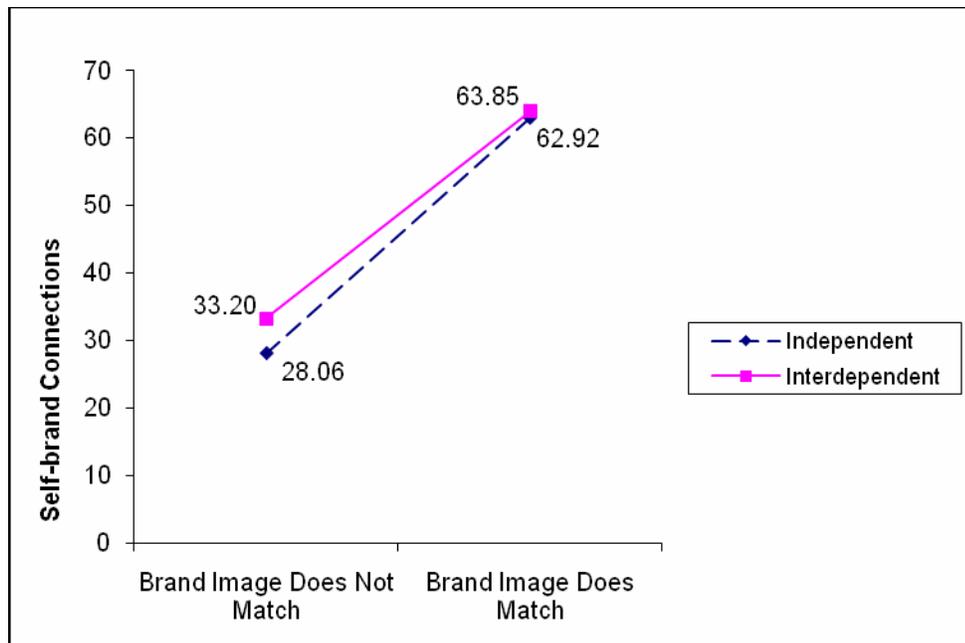
match condition $F(1, 241) = -2.30, p < .022$. These results are shown in Figure 5.4. Thus, H_{2A} was supported.

Figure 5.4
Outgroup Self-Brand Connections by Brand Image Match by Self-Construal Type



The contrast comparing interdependent to independent self-construals for the ingroup revealed interdependents and independents formed similar self-brand connections, $M_{\text{independent}} = 62.92, M_{\text{interdependent}} = 63.85; F(1,241) = .329, p < .742$ when the brand image was consistent with the ingroup. In the brand image does match the ingroup condition, significant differences were found in the self-brand connections between the two self-construal types, $M_{\text{independent}} = 28.06$ and interdependent $M_{\text{interdependent}} = 33.20; F(1, 241) = 2.04, p < .043$. See Figure 5.5 below.

Figure 5.5
Ingroup Self-Brand Connections by Brand Image Match by Self-Construal Type



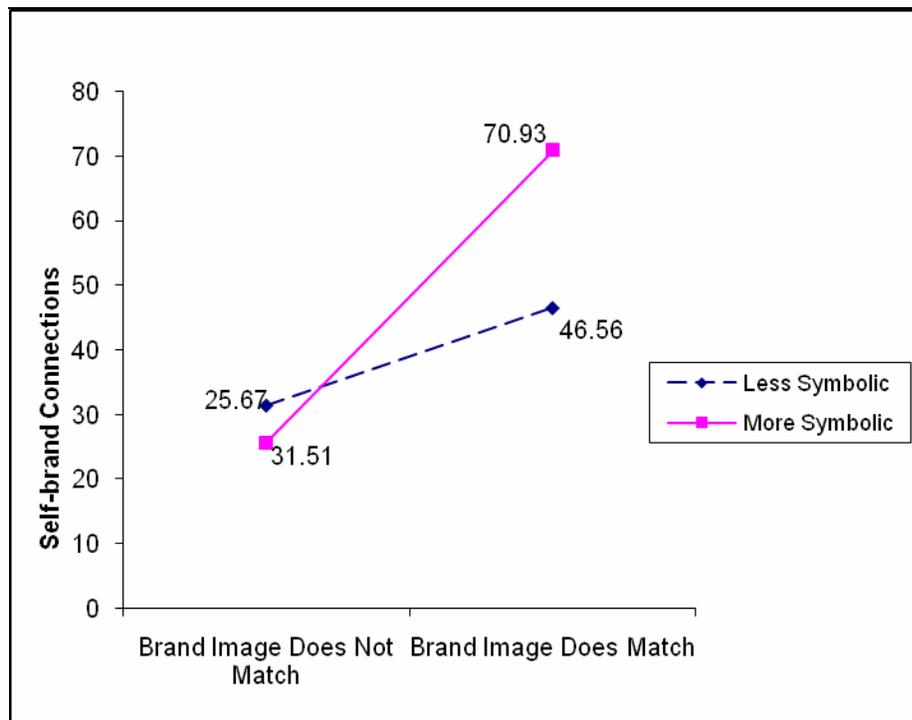
For H_{2B} and H_{2C} , these hypotheses extended the prediction of Escalas and Bettman's (2005) H_2 to include the moderating effects of identity centrality. Thus, predicting a four-way interaction between group type, brand image match, self-construal and identity centrality. This interaction was not significant, $F(1, 1064) = 0.279, p < .757$. Thus, H_{2B} and H_{2C} were not supported.

5.4.3. Hypothesis 3

For H_{3A} and H_{3B} , it was hypothesized that the effects of ingroup and outgroup brand associations on self-brand connections will be stronger when the brand was viewed as highly symbolic, a direct replication of Escalas and Bettman's (2005) H_3 . The three way interaction between group match, group type and brand symbolism was significant, $F(1, 1064) = 73.452, p < .000$; see Figures 5.6 and 5.7. Similar to Escalas and Bettman

(2005), the results are presented after dichotomizing the brand symbolism measure. The results indicate that for brands consistent with the ingroup when the brand is highly symbolic, participants formed stronger self-brand connections compared to brands that were low in symbolic value, $M_{\text{Low-symbolism}} = 45.67$ and $M_{\text{High-symbolism}} = 70.93$, $F(1,268) = 11.44$, $p < .000$. Opposite effects were found for the ingroup brand does not match condition, $M_{\text{Low-symbolism}} = 31.5$ and $M_{\text{High-symbolism}} = 25.67$, $F(1,268) = 2.70$, $p < .007$. The results are presented below in Figure 5.6

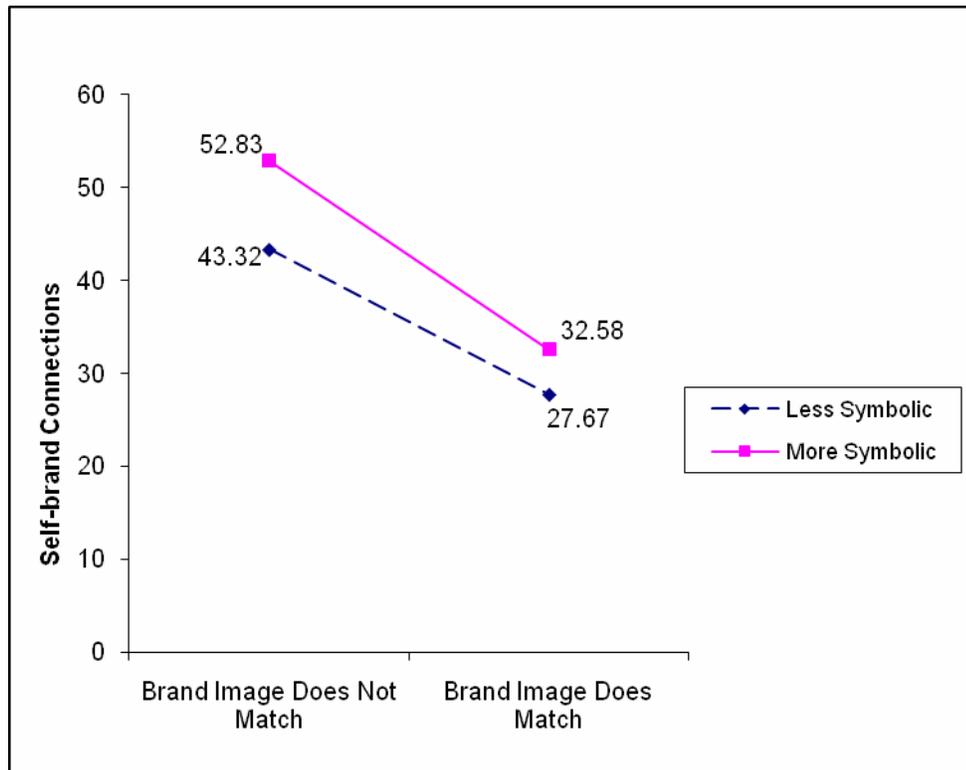
Figure 5.6
Ingroup Self-Brand Connections by Brand Image Match by Brand Symbolism



In the outgroup condition, brand symbolism also moderated self-brand connections, significant results were found in the brand image match condition, $M_{\text{Low-symbolism}} = 32.58$ and $M_{\text{High-symbolism}} = 27.67$, $F(1,268) = 2.307$, $p < .022$; as well as in the

outgroup image inconsistent condition, $M_{\text{Low-symbolism}} = 43.32$ and $M_{\text{High-symbolism}} = 52.83$, $F(1,268) = 2.634, p < .009$. The results are presented below in Figure 5.7. Thus H_{3A} and H_{3B} were supported.

Figure 5.7
Outgroup Self-Brand Connections by Brand Image Match by Brand Symbolism



For H_{3C} and H_{3D} , the findings in Hypotheses 3A and 3B were extended to account for differences in self-brand connections due to the degree of identity centrality. It was predicted that identity centrality will moderate self-brand connections when the brand was high in symbolism. The four-way interaction between group type, brand image match, identity centrality and brand symbolism was insignificant $F(1, 1064) = 1.319, p < .251$. Thus H_{3C} and H_{3D} were not supported.

5.5. Discussion

The overall objective of this study was to assess the moderating influence of identity centrality on the formation of self-brand connections. Individuals reported higher self-brand connections for brands with associations congruent with an ingroup compared to associations incongruent with an ingroup (Hypothesis 1A). Brands associated with the image of an outgroup resulted in lower self-brand connections than brands with images not associated with an outgroup (Hypothesis 1B). These findings were consistent with the findings of Escalas and Bettman (2005).

The consideration of identity centrality in this study was based on the expectation that ingroup members will form differential self-brand connections for the brand image match condition. Extending these findings, identity centrality positively moderated self-brand connections for the ingroup (H_{1C}). This result is significant in that it reveals the significance of centrality in examining self-brand interactions. It is not enough to say that an identity is salient to a particular brand. As evidenced in the results, identity centrality leads to stronger self-brand connections in the brand image does match condition. This difference among ingroup members indicates there is varying levels of importance within the group. From a marketer's stand point this could mean the difference in message effectiveness. Salience may be sufficient enough to encourage an individual to attend to a particular message. But is it enough to create an emotional bond? Is it enough to get the consumer to buy the product? It is argued that centrality is true a catalyst for self-brand connections.

The moderating influences of identity centrality on outgroup brand associations was insignificant (H_{1C}). It difficult to hypothesize the directional influence of identity

centrality in outgroup effects due to various meanings associated with outgroups. Identity importance can be hypothesized to influence the outgroup but it will vary depending on the desired degree of divergence from the outgroup. For instance, an individual may declare an outgroup but may desire to eventually become one its members (e.g. fraternities and sororities). Or perhaps an individual may have some level of similarity with the outgroup. These scenarios make it difficult to predict how identity centrality will influence self-brand connections.

Brand associations not matching the image of the outgroup were lower for individuals with an independent self-construal compared to interdependent self-construal (H₂). This finding was consistent with Escalas and Bettman's (2005) results. They reasoned that outgroup brand associations will have the greatest effect on participants with independent self construals due to their strong differentiation needs. This was evidenced in this study as well.

Identity centrality moderated these findings such that the degree of self-brand connections for independent versus interdependent self-construal was reversed. Interdependents formed lower self-brand connections than independents. This is due to the importance placed on the ingroup identity. Interdependents were thought to shift their focus from outgroup differentiation to ingroup differentiation, leading to lower self-brand connections. By doing this they are attempting to show ingroup favoritism and seeking distinctiveness from the outgroup. Lower self-brand connections for individuals with interdependent self-construals is more in line with the self-construal research which views interdependents are more collectivist in nature (Singelis 1994). The contrast in

findings due to identity centrality may be worth investigating the continued use of the self-construal to examine individual differences in self-brand connections.

There was a non-significant interaction effect between group type, brand image match, brand symbolism and identity centrality. It is argued that the interaction would have been significant if the scope of the study focused on the ingroup or outgroup only. By holding this condition constant, the interactive effect of identity centrality and brand symbolism would have been shown.

Overall, the pattern of results supports the general idea proposed in this essay: individuals use brands to create or communicate their self-concept partly in an effort to meet certain identity goals (e.g. self-verification, self-enhancement) and do it more so when a particular identity is central.

5.6. Managerial Implications

Building brands through the development of emotional connections has been advocated in consumer markets (Pawle and Cooper 2006; Lindstrom 2005; Woods 2004) and identity centrality is a means to understand how consumers develop emotional connections to brands. As shown in this study, participants who rated their ingroup identity as high in centrality resulted in the strongest self-brand connections. When taken in conjunction with identity commitment (Foote 1951), this finding suggests that identity centrality and identity commitment lead to stronger brand connections.

This research also has implications for marketing communications. For marketers and retailers alike, the use of identity centrality in the crafting of messages for targeted groups is a new opportunity. Identity centrality may be communicated explicitly or implicitly in the advertisement. This is in line with Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-

Volpe (2004) who identified two distinct forms of psychological importance (e.g. centrality). Explicitly, the message should state the importance of an identity to the perceiver. Through an appraisal process the individual will assess the importance of the identity and act in accordance with the appraisal (Ashmore et al. 2004). Implicitly, the message should use cues to trigger the identity that is highest on the individual's hierarchy of selves.

Another important point for managers is that centrality will cause the consumer to self-reference. Self-referencing is "the process of relating information to oneself" integrating communicated information with knowledge of oneself (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1996, p. 408). If the information communicated is related to an identity that sits at the top of the individual's hierarchy of selves *and* that identity is relevant to a particular good or service, individuals are more likely to attend to the communication and perhaps be inclined to purchase the good or service.

5.7. Research Limitations and Future Research

The findings of this research provided important managerial and theoretical insights into the role of identity centrality in the formation of self-brand connections. Notwithstanding these insights, several limitations should be addressed. First caution must be exercised with the self-construal measure, Escalas and Bettman (2005) suggested their results were inconsistent with previous results on individualism-collectivism research which they say is akin to self-construal. Notably, this construct may not be optimal for considering individual differences in the formation self-brand connections among older consumers who cannot directly relate to some of the scale items presented in the self-construal measures. This limits the interpretation of the findings of H₂, because it

is difficult to tell if the hypothesis was not supported due to the poor measure or other theoretical arguments.

Future research is warranted to address this limitation and expand the theoretical validity of the findings. One opportunity for future investigation that deserves further attention is the potential for assessing identity centrality within the marketing domain. For instance, this study examined the centrality of the reference group identity. Perhaps it will be more accurate to assess this measure relevant to the brand as well. In other words, a construct that answers the question: how important is an identity to a specific brand? Instead of, how important is your ingroup?

5.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter reported results of a quasi-experimental study investigating the moderating role of identity centrality in the formation of self-brand connections. The primary goal of the research was to test the moderating effect of identity centrality on self-brand connections. The results indicate identity centrality was a positive moderator of self-brand connections. This is a significant finding because it means future research on self-brand interactions should incorporate centrality measure into their study designs before making conclusions on their findings. The next chapter concludes this dissertation by providing a general discussion of the findings and contributions across the three essays.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Implications

6.1. Introduction

The intent of this dissertation was to provide a theoretically grounded and consumer informed account of the various motivations influencing self-brand interactions and identity centrality. Theoretical and managerial advances emanating from the multiple identities-multiple motive paradigm are discussed below.

6.2. Theoretical and Conceptual Contributions

This dissertation advances a more robust theory of self-referent consumption while providing an identity motive-based framework (Essay 1) in which identity motives are satisfied through symbolic brand associations. This approach draws on Identity Process Theory (Breakwell 1988) and leads to a more comprehensive understanding of how multiple identity motives guide the self-concept in self-brand interactions. By advancing this framework, distinctions among self-brand phenomena are revealed by highlighting the multiplicity of not only an individual's motives but their identities as well. The current definition of self-brand connections conceptualizes the self in terms of the overall self-concept and does little to characterize the multidimensionality of the self. Thus one of the greatest advantages of the framework is that it allows one or more identities, or a context specific identity (i.e. purchasing identity) to be examined. These considerations are in line with suggestions that identity is multidimensional (Markus and

Kunda 1986) as opposed to the unidimensional self (Sirgy 1982); an advance that further refines our knowledge of self-brand interactions.

A second area of contribution is derived from the qualitative investigation of self-brand interactions: including self-brand congruence with multiple identities, life-cycle state influences, and the use of identity motives to manage multiple identities. Nine identity motives were put forth and hypothesized to influence both identity centrality and self-brand connections. Expanding the number of identity motives beyond self-esteem and self-consistency leads to new ways to study self-brand phenomena (i.e. competing identities, identity centrality, competing motives, identity management). Most important for the purpose at hand, the participant's qualitative responses demonstrated the validity of the multiple identity motives proposition put forth in this dissertation. Individuals *do* encounter multiple or competing identity motives. These motives take several forms, sometimes being more applicable at only the individual level, group level, or in some cases at both levels. Further, the inclusion of multiple identity motives theoretically extends the self-referent consumption literature, primarily in the area of how multiple identities emerge or become central.

Conceptual advances offered through the identity motive framework takes other forms as well. Application of the identity-motive framework increases the base knowledge of self-brand interactions beyond what has been obtained through dominant theories (i.e. Product Image Congruity Theory; Extended Self-Theory) or widely accepted constructs (e.g. salience). The inclusion of identity centrality is significant in that forces marketers and researchers to consider a wider range of identity motives. Multiple identities operate through a process of identity centrality, whereby one identity

becomes more central than another (Stryker and Serpe 1994; Settles 2004). This is because centrality or importance is almost always associated with some degree of motivation (Bagozzi, Bergami, Leone 2003). It was hypothesized and supported in this dissertation that as multiple identity motives are satisfied a given identity increases in centrality. This relationship suggests motivation is closely aligned with importance. Therefore, if identity conflict should arise or if multiple identities have equal levels of importance, the brand's ability to satisfy various identity motives may ease this conflict.

However in evaluating the usefulness of the identity centrality construct, one could ask a bottom-line question: "Is there value in thinking of self-brand phenomena in terms of a central identity? The findings in this dissertation suggest the answer to this question is "yes". Application of the centrality construct compels researchers and marketers to view the self-concept as dynamic, an axiom that commands a more careful look at how consumer identity shapes not only brand choice, but related self-brand connections. Based on this, new research questions are suggested, the answer to which can improve the accuracy in which researchers explain self-brand phenomena. For example, how does identity centrality impact brand relationships? How does identity centrality impact multiple identities simultaneously? How is centrality established? How does centrality impact consumption choices?

Lastly, the identity centrality construct can serve as a meaningful starting point for the articulation of a brand-identity theory. Concepts reflective of the role of identity in brand outcomes variously labeled as self-brand connections, consumer brand meaning, and product-image congruity represent the most studied dependent variables in the self-referent consumption literature (Ng and Houston 2006; Escalas and Bettman 2005;

Chaplin and Roedder-John 2005). Identity centrality related to brand interaction may hold promise for brand-related outcomes surrounding a central identity. This task is left for future research.

Next prescriptive managerial guidance for effective brand management practice is offered through application of the centrality perspective.

6.3. Managerial Contributions

In an effort to address the managerial implications of this dissertation, four central questions are considered: (1) How can managers determine which identity motives are worth pursuing? 2) What strategies and tactics should be employed to pursue these motives? 3) How can managers use the framework to attract more consumers? and (4) How can identity motives/identity centrality be evaluated and assessed?

6.3.1. Which Motives to Pursue?

Identity motives determine two things: what consumers want to do and how much they want to do it. Brand managers would love to know what motivates individuals to buy specific goods or services. If they knew which identity motives would lead individuals to purchase their brand, then perhaps they would develop a brand management program to satisfy relevant identity motives among potential buyers. So why not just ask consumers about their identity motives? Motives have two key properties: direction and intensity (Bagozzi 1997). Direction is simply the valence of the motivation, being favorable or unfavorable; and intensity represents the strength of the motive. If a particular motive is satisfied and the direction is favorable as suggested in this dissertation this may support a specific identity becoming central. To utilize this framework successfully, brand managers must recognize that the identity motive satisfied

has to be strong enough and in the right direction to entice individuals to purchase the offering.

Successful application of the identity motive proposition will further require identification of the most fertile opportunities for motive development. Ideally, firms should research which motives are generally satisfied by given product category and formulate their strategies based on those motives or a combination thereof. For instance in Essay 2, the *continuity* and *recognition* motives were more influential in an automobile brand choice context. If Toyota wanted to craft a brand campaign around identity, they would find ways to creatively depict those motives in their marketing communications. High potential motives include those characterized by high social values, namely: belonging, distinctiveness, meaning, recognition, security. Identity motives beyond these mentioned can be evaluated in terms of their symbolic interaction value.

In this way, consumer brand preference can be understood in the context of underlying identity motive satisfaction as motives are chosen with motive-congruent associations. The established link between brands and consumer identity motives provide opportunities in the context of marketing segmentation and targeting. Based on the framework presented in this dissertation, a heterogeneous consumer audience could be segmented into distinct clusters according to which identity motive(s) individuals are looking to satisfy by choosing a particular brand. The resulting information could be used by marketing managers to develop appropriate advertising campaigns and brand strategies.

6.3.2. How to Proceed Strategically and Tactically?

Firms can take the results provided in this dissertation to hone strategies and tactics that will evoke a consumer's central identity; revealing how their brand supports the satisfaction of relevant identity motives. To demonstrate how the brand satisfies an individual's identity motives, the manager must possess an adequate repertoire of knowledge regarding the various ways in which motives can be pursued and how they are represented in the minds of the consumer. Strategies can then be crafted to display increased motive satisfaction and in part enhance self-brand connections.

Once the decision has been made to incorporate key identity motives into a brand strategy, the desired level of motive satisfaction must be determined. Since previous research suggest that motives fall into either an intrapersonal or interpersonal domain (Wicker, Lambert, Richardson and Kahler 1984), it is essential that firm develop an appropriate strategy. This means companies should consider if the motive will be satisfied on an individual or group level. Thus, the receipt of brand communications by the individual will vary across these levels in the same way that the self has been shown to vary across situations (e.g. situational self, malleable self) and across social categories (e.g. social self, social identity). The manager may also want to devise programs to facilitate life cycle state changes by crafting identity-based nostalgia campaigns. This particular tactic lends itself to the satisfaction of the continuity motive, in which individuals desire certain brands that have a level of significance across an individual's identity.

Beyond intrapersonal or interpersonal motive satisfaction, identity motives can also be incorporated at the level of the corporation or the individual brand. The

preeminence of the identity motive idea suggests that any company putting its name on a line of products engages in corporate identity activities. The fact that corporate branding is where the motive process begins has not gained full consideration in the marketing literature. Moreover, the reality of today's marketplace supports the value of dealing with consumers on a more personalized corporate level. The value of a strong corporate identity strategy inclusive of a multiple identity paradigm lies in its ability to transcend the irritations encountered with a "homogenous corporate identity" strategy. In this sense, the corporate identity can serve as a safety net supporting multiple identity motives (on a corporate level) cultivated at both the firm and the individual brand level.

A mastery of the factors that encourage motive satisfaction among consumers will be demanded at this stage. The barriers that normally separate large companies from their consumers must also be removed if motive satisfaction is to occur (i.e. consumer mistrust). Advertising and public relationship activities that reveal intimate knowledge of the company-as-a-person should come strongly into play. Program execution stressing one or more of the nine motives will establish an "identity link" between the individual and the brand and in some cases the firm, further supporting the psychological benefit of identity centrality.

6.3.3. How Can the Framework Help Firms Attract More Customers?

How can firms attract more consumers using this framework? The answer to this question is based on the premise that consumers prefer brands that allow them to express their (desired or actual) identity. Firms attempting to connect with consumers on a deep and meaningful level will have to identify areas of similarity and synergy with their consumers. Efforts to attract more customers are better received when aligned with the

brand's core identity. Since brands have the potential to characterize individuals in a split-second (Bucholz and Wordemann 2000) consumers are well aware of what their brand decisions tell others about themselves. In essence the brand becomes an identifier, which is not always separate from the functionality or quality. Consumers will selectively choose brands to send the correct "message" to relevant others.

From the perspective of the firm, the "message" should be build around the satisfaction of the identity motives driving the purchase, and the identity that is central to the purchase context. By proving that the associations of the brand can or will satisfy a consumer's identity motives, the brand will become more appealing to consumers. Improper use of symbolic values, associations, and meanings in the message will lead to the decline in brand preference leaving a serious impact on the brand's image. Therefore market research is strongly recommended before an identity motive strategy is advanced. Developing a successful strategy that makes the brand (more attractive) can be achieved if the brand can demonstrate motive satisfaction and cater to a specific central identity.

The identity motive(s) firms choose to pursue should be a direct reflection of the brand core identity, or perhaps a key selling point of the brand. More importantly, the motive(s) must be desired by the consumer, be it a current motive or an aspired motive. Current motives are related to the actual self, whereas aspired motives are related to an aspired self. From a communications standpoint, the brand must convey the motive that it is attempting to satisfy. It is not enough for a firm to state that the brand will satisfy particular motives, consumers must believe it. This means marketing communication should be genuine and based on the authentic image of the brand. Any indication of manipulation would be a costly mistake for the firm especially across the long term

considering that consumers are becoming increasingly informed and demanding. The more distinctive the motive is portrayed in comparison to competing brands, the more clearly the brand can be differentiated from the competition.

Boulding (1965) was one of the earliest researchers to recognize the commercial importance of image. He found that individuals do not respond to reality, instead they respond to their perception of reality. In this case, consumers respond to their desired image that the brand will help them to portray. Image is posited to be a combination of the brand associations and their perceived reality of their identity. The relationship between a consumer's identity and brand identity, defined as a set of brand associations which the marketer is aiming to create and obtain (Reed 2004) is potentially where self-brand connections began to develop. Brand identity supports the relationship between the customer and the brand by generating a value proposition that includes functional, emotional, and self-expressive benefits (Aaker 1996). These self expressive benefits will attract more consumers who are looking to project a particular image through symbolic brand associations.

6.3.4. How Can Identity Motives/Identity Centrality Efforts be Evaluated and Assessed?

To assess the success of the identity-motive based strategy there is a need for evaluation and assessment. Measures of effectiveness should consider two factors: (1) how well did the strategy achieve the branding objective? And (2) how well did the strategy contribute to attaining the overall marketing objectives? If the strategy is successful, it should be used in future branding plans. Otherwise, the flaws should be corrected. A successful brand strategy should enjoy the consequences of enhanced self-brand connections, increased brand loyalty, and increased positive brand attitudes.

The satisfaction of identity motives can be monitored over time to determine the overall success of the identity motive-based program. Assessment of the identity-motive strategy can be used to gauge whether or not motive strategies should be continued at all, and to what levels those efforts should be pursued. For example, a brand that enjoys a high level of loyalty without the benefit of identity motive-based strategy may be sustained at a lower investment than one delivering only moderate but promising quality levels with an identity motive-based strategy.

6.4. Limitations of the Research

Despite the contributions mentioned above, several limitations of the current research exist. While these limitations restrict the conclusions that can be drawn here, they do not preclude the value of the identity centrality construct and multiple motive-multiple identities paradigm. By acknowledging the limitations, areas for improvement in future research are suggested, maximizing the research potential of identity centrality and the applicability of multiple identity motives in theory and practice.

Methodologically, the dissertation employs a mixed method approach which has its advantages. However, there are a few disadvantages to the methods used. First, the qualitative study conducted to find evidence of identity motives tested in this dissertation could have benefited follow-up interviewing. Each participant spent a total of 45 to 90 minutes in a single meeting. Perhaps greater insight could have been gleaned from conducting follow-up interviews to confirm the motives identified so that participants could elaborate on their responses. This follow-up did not occur in the first several interviews but after becoming acclimated with qualitative techniques, follow-up was done inside of the interview.

Conceptually, the list of identity motives is restricted to those originally identified in exploratory phase of this dissertation. Future researchers should seek to add to the list of identity motives tested here. It would be unwise to assume that the nine motives examined here comprise an exhaustive list of motivational influences on identity centrality and self-brand interactions.

6.5. Future Research

Four of the most promising, research ideas are discussed here briefly. The intent is to demonstrate the potential contributory value of the multiple motive-multiple identity paradigm as a whole, and its ability to motivate the marketing manager's agenda.

The first research idea addresses the relationship between the various motives. Although multiple motives were found to predict identity centrality, the relationship among the multiple motives still remains unknown. Future research should provide an understanding of the relationships between the various motives. Specifically, future research should answer questions such as: 1) to what degree is the operation of each motive dependent upon the other motives? 2) Does a motive hierarchy exist among the motives? And 3) Is there a conflict or interference among the motives? The findings of this dissertation cannot answer these questions, as the relationship between the motives was not directly tested (beyond their unique contributions).

A second research idea lies in the cross sectional nature of data collected. The ability of identity motives to predict identity centrality was inferred. The survey design did not allow the identity processes in action. A longitudinal study is necessary to assess identity processes across time. Thus these data cannot show to what extent the observed relationships were caused by processes shaping identity centrality or the meanings of the

identities themselves. Both may be guided by identity motives (Ethier and Deaux 1994). Hence, these findings might be complemented by longitudinal research into processes shaping both structure and content of identity. This can be achieved by assessing motive measures at two points in time and analysis the shift in motive importance.

Comparing identity motives across different dimensions of the self is a third area ripe for future research. It may be valuable to examine in greater detail the relationship between individual and group levels of identity. Individuals would provide different aspects of their identities and sort them into group or individual level categories. Once completed, motive ratings can be assessed and checked for differences between the two categories. In this dissertation, multiple identity motives were conceptualized on the individual level. Lyons (1996) has suggested transposing these principles to the group level, referring to group self-esteem, group distinctiveness, and so on.

The last area of future research involves the motivational influence of identity centrality among reference group members. For example, brands can be used to meet self-presentation goals (e.g. meaning), serve as devices of social integration (e.g. belonging), connect consumers to the past (e.g. continuity); become symbols of personal accomplishment (e.g. recognition), provide self-esteem, allow one to differentiate oneself and by expressing individuality (e.g. distinctiveness), and may protect us from threats to identity (e.g. security). Given these multiple motives which can lead to social identity activation as well as centrality, a future study that focuses on reference group motivations should provide evidence of how the operation of multiple identity motives leads to the importance of a reference group identity.

6.6. A Closing Note

Many conceptual and empirical tools have been brought to bear in this dissertation. Through them, the present study has tried to illustrate identity centrality is a mechanism by which consumers manage multiple identities in the marketplace through the assignment of different levels of importance to each identity relative to various product categories. Using this perspective lens provides a deeper understanding of self-referent consumption and provides a more detailed understanding for marketing theory and practice. In framing identity motive-based consumption, new ideas for the study of self-brand interactions have been advanced; yet many more are left to the agenda of future researchers.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Questions

Brand Preferences

Can you name your favorite brands? (in any particular category)

What are your thoughts on others who purchase things that are really expensive?

Name a brand that you would absolutely not wear.

What does a particular brand say about you?

When you think of Brand X, what comes to mind?

What does Brand X mean to you?

What does the (specific feature) of Brand X mean to you?

Does Brand X help communicate your identity to others (whether you know them or not)?

Does Brand X help you become the person you want to be?

Consumer Identity

Can you list four identities that you currently hold in life right now?

How much do you think about any of those identities when you shop?

Which identity do you think is most important for you right now?

Can you relate your identity to the actual brand?

Are you the typical user of Brand X?

If not, how would you describe the typical user of Brand X?

Do others in your reference group also consume Brand X? Why?

Appendix B Coded Transcriptions

Data Extracted	Coded for:
<p>But if they were really cute, I would never tell any of my friends, and I would never let them see the inside label cause' it will say Payless. And if we had to go somewhere to take off our shoes, I wouldn't take them off, I'd be too embarrassed. I can't have my friends thinking I shop at Payless.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brand prestige ▪ Conspicuous brand use ▪ Reference groups ▪ Belonging motive ▪ Security motive
<p>For where I am in my life right now, those cars are more reflective of the fact that I have reached a certain level. So I wouldn't buy an Acura because its looks just like a Toyota and everybody has a Toyota. I wouldn't buy a Cadillac, cause that is my dad's car. I wouldn't buy an Infiniti or Jaguar, because Jaguars are an old retired man's car. It's not a girl car, it's a guy car, an old man car. And I am not the SUV type, even though some of them look nice, I am not the truck type.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Life cycle stage, brand congruency ▪ Distinctiveness motive ▪ Brand user imagery ▪ Family brand associations ▪ Self-consistency motive ▪ Identity threat ▪ Brand-identity congruency
<p>Because I'm not. Its not that I don't want to be married with children. But I'm not and I don't want to be seen that way. It says wife, kids, cat, dog, and house with the white picket fence. It's not me as of yet. They make the big bodied cars for those kinds of women, but it doesn't say me. People are often influenced by their peers, but I am not using my peers to make a decision, I don't want to be like them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Future self ▪ Self-concept perceptions ▪ Brand-image congruity ▪ Self-consistency motive ▪ Brand associations ▪ Reference group
<p>Palmer's Cocoa butter, I used it as a moisturizer, and have used it ever since. With the impending stretch marks, I have been putting it on my belly twice a day. And when she (unborn daughter) is old enough, I'll use it on her. Let's see what else. Oh yes, barrettes and beads in my hair, my mother would braid our hair and make it pretty with the beads and barrettes. I can't recall any brands of them, because I was so little, but I want to do her (unborn daughter) hair in the same way. I don't really know how to braid but I will learn. I want her to experience a lot of the same things I did when I was a little girl (smiling).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuity motive ▪ Hair braiding ▪ Childhood memories ▪ Shared experiences
<p>Well like I said I like to shop based on my smarts, and if I am going to invest 30 grand into a car, I want it to last at least until my retirement kicks in (laughing). Volvos are good cars. They last. My station wagon, I have had that car for almost 12 years now. And it runs pretty well. With the exception of a few minor repairs, I haven't really had any major problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-efficacy ▪ Brand loyalty ▪ Brand knowledge

Appendix B (Continued)

<p>Being the responsible father, I wanted Sascha (his daughter) to have a car that was going to last her a while, at least until she was able to put a dent into her student loans. She would have a reliable car, and wouldn't have to worry about buying a new one. Well not at least until she was in a position to afford a new one. If she is a smart girl like her father, she'd buy a Volvo, when that time came around (smiling). My wife, well she runs a Jewelry store, and she is price conscious like me. But she wanted a nice car without us both having to spend a lot of money. So the solution to that is.... I kept the old station wagon, and she drives the newer sedan. We are both sold on the quality of Volvos. I don't need to convince her much.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Family purchasing decisions ▪ Purchase motivation ▪ Brand motivation
<p>Wearing what you like, not thinking about what other people are going to judge what you are wearing, and I think someone who has self-esteem doesn't have to wear something really revealing, promote a bad message. Something that... maybe it doesn't look good to you, but if they like it (meaning the person who is wearing it) then they are happy wearing it. Like a shirt from Target.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Self-consistency
<p>So you have people that dress very punk rockish and they are trying to be different (they wear black things and wear chains).... gothic. But then there is a whole group of them, so they are not different. For me it is more of the friends that I come into contact with on a daily basis, I'd rather be distinctive among my friends versus people I didn't know.Some people have to buy a brand and it has to have the name all over it, like BEBE in big bold letters, I can't stand that. Like the Louis Vuitton bags, the same thing, I want high fashion, but not like what everyone else has. I don't want to go around looking like them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-esteem ▪ Self-consistency ▪ Distinctiveness ▪ Fashion ▪ Reference groups
<p>Palmer's Cocoa Butter, I used it as a moisturizer, and have used it ever since. With the impending stretch marks, I have been putting it on my belly twice a day. And when she is old enough, I'll use it on her (unborn daughter). Let's see what else. Oh yes, barrettes and beads in my hair, my mother would braid our hair and make it pretty with the beads and barrettes. I can't recall any brands of them, because I was so little, but I want to do her (unborn daughter) hair the same way. I don't really know how to braid but I will learn. I want her to experience a lot of the same things I did when I was a little girl (smiling).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continuity ▪ Family influences ▪ Childhood identity

Appendix B (Continued)

<p>Being the responsible father, I wanted Sascha (his daughter) to have a car that was going to last her a while, at least until she was able to put a dent into her student loans. She would have a reliable car, and wouldn't have to worry about buying a new one. Well not at least until she was in a position to afford a new one. If she is a smart girl like her father, she'd buy a Volvo, when that time came around (smiling). My wife, well she runs a Jewelry store, and she is price conscious like me. But she wanted a nice car without us both having to spend a lot of money. So the solution to that is.... I kept the old station wagon, and she drives the newer sedan. We are both sold on the quality of Volvos. I don't need to convince her much.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-efficacy ▪ Family influences
<p>I associate the F150 with friends, because with friends we think of intimacy. With the regular cab, not the extended cab, but the regular cab, you can pretty much fit one person, maybe two. They have close seats which provides for a lot of intimacy between people. And what's one thing that friends ask people to do, and that is to go out. You know when you got a truck, people ask "can you haul this and haul that". Also, the practicality of the truck.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Belonging motive ▪ Friendship ▪ Social Influences
<p>What do I think? Well most people I see are younger girls, and I think what a brat, their mom buys them all of their clothes (laughing). But the reason that I like A and F is really stupid, but I like the moose on their shirts. Because I like moose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Significance ▪ Abercrombie and Fitch ▪ Social influences ▪ Identity threat
<p>Because it's cute, and I'll buy anything with birds and moose on it. Also my mom collects Christmas moose and things like that.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaning motive
<p>Probably because it is the highest (most expensive) out of American Eagle and all of them, and Hollister.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brand meaning
<p>If it was cute then yeah, because I like moose. I always say like for Christmas people either have a snowman or Santa Clause, my mom used to be all snowman and Santas, but I am going to be reindeer and moose. We usually have one (moose) that we decorate every year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaning motive ▪ Moose

Appendix B (Continued)

<p>Right now I have a twelve year old Mitsubishi Gallant, It's a black car, but the paint on the car has peeled off on the back of the trunk and part of the roof and it looks speckled like a black and white car. It makes the car look beat up. But it's a good car. People see me in that car and make judgments that I am poor, and in an economically low social class, otherwise I wouldn't be driving in such a low end car. If you pull up at a stop light, and someone is next to you in a Mercedes, they look at you in your car and you can tell by their facial expression that they are so not digging you. I thought for a long time it was because of my skin color, but people of my own skin color do the same thing when they drive fancy cars. But the funny thing is people who are in cars more beat up than mine, they say "hi" to me.(Laughing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-image ▪ Other's perception ▪ Self-consistency
<p>If I pull up at a stop sign and they look Mexican I don't care what they think because their car is more beat up than mine. But if a Mexican pulls up in a Mercedes I think they will judge me based on my car. These thoughts are real! I am not making this up. The sad part is it never really bothered me until I got into a different salary level. Up until I hit the six figure salary level, I didn't mind. I don't know. I just don't want people to..... No! I don't want people to think of me as just another statistic as a poor African, black- looking statistic. I want them to see me an upwardly mobile successful woman.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-image ▪ Other's perception ▪ Self-consistency
<p>They (Lexus IS350) are not sporty. They look like someone who has a family of four. I want something that is sporty, that makes me look upwardly mobile and professional. Something that says I've made it. I'm single and I don't have a family. I don't want people to think that I am older person. You know, so what I do is.... while I am driving, I look at cars and I look at who is in them, and how the cars look, and pretty much everything except for the IS350 I see mature looking people in them, looking like they have kids. Lexus also has an IS250 but the people that I see in the 250 are like young "colleegy" kids. It's fast and sporty, but the young college kids are in them. But I don't want anyone to think... Let me correct myself, I don't want people to assume that I have kids. That's why I don't only want to buy that model. I also will not buy the IS250 because I don't want anyone to think that I am one of those "just trying to get my hands around life college kids". Does that sound kind of vain?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-image ▪ Other's perception ▪ Self-consistency ▪ Identity signaling

Appendix B (Continued)

<p>Well that's more of my black male identity not really my father, if that's the case then I would get a Volvo Station wagon. (laughing). It's a little bit of both all wrapped up. You know I can't say which one it would be.... Well the car will be more for status. So if I really wanted just straight up status, I would choose the Lexus, and if I was going for the responsible, competent father, then I'd choose the Volvo or the Honda.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-consistency ▪ Status ▪ Self-image ▪ Multiple identities ▪ Reference groups
<p>Hollister is like more the middle-school aged children, and A and F is for high school kids and older... and Rule, well no one knows about Rule, and they only have a few stores, but no one knows about it.... I can fit them, but I really don't go in there because it's for high schoolers, but every now and then, I'll buy a t-shirt out of there.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-image ▪ Self-consistency ▪ Identity threat
<p>Just straight up me! Me being a black male, umm just, just strictly frontin'. But the fact that it will be a big enough vehicle for my family would be a plus, but that's not really what I am buying that for. I'm buying that for status. For a big, pretty vehicle that's it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reference groups ▪ Family influences ▪ Status
<p>So I like designer shoes, but they don't all have to be designer, they just have to look cute. Sometimes I drop the name of the brand in front of my girlfriends like Minolo Blanick or Via Spiaga. Some of my friends think they're all that and they know fashion, so because they act that way, we always talk about what we have on. They say "oh this suit is Chinese Laundry", "this suit is Gucci", or "I just picked up this shirt from the Armani Exchange". When I get around them, I will let them know, that it is something expensive. So my friends who aren't that snooty, I will say I just got this at a bargain price, and I will tell them how much I paid for it. But with my snooty friends, I will always lie about the price and never tell the true price of it. And say that I bought it at another store, and never an outlet.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reference groups ▪ Self-image ▪ Identity threat
<p>Yes. But only if they were really cute, I would never tell any of my friends, and I would never let them see the inside label cause' it will say Payless. And if we had to go somewhere to take off our shoes, I wouldn't take them off, I'd be too embarrassed. I can't have my friends thinking I shop at Payless.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Self-image ▪ Other's perception ▪ Self-consistency ▪ Identity threat

About the Author

Tracy is the youngest child of Joyce Harmon and Joe Wright, sister to Malik and Conswello, aunt to Stedman, Mundedrick, Nigel, Nigele, Rashaad, and Jaylen. Tracy received a B.S. degree in Chemical Engineering from Florida A & M University, and an M.B.A. from Rollins College. She will receive a doctoral degree from the University of South Florida.

Starting in the fall of 2007, Tracy will begin a postdoctoral assignment with the Whitman School of Management at Syracuse University. Beyond her identity-related research agenda, Tracy is also pursuing projects in urban branding and urban consumption.