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A Cognitive Role Theoretic Approach to the Consumer Role

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Business

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A COGNITIVE ROLE THEORETIC APPROACH TO THE CONSUMER ROLE

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Jodie Whelan

Graduate Program in Business Administration

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to introduce a role theoretic approach to the empirical study of the consumer role. To do this, I adopt a cognitive role theory perspective and propose that the consumer role is best conceptualized as a network of associations subject to the cognitive rules of availability and accessibility. When a consumer role prime (i.e., a tangible, external stimulus associated with being a consumer) is encountered, the network of associations should be activated and cognition, perception, and behavior should be shaped accordingly. This proposition is at the heart of my dissertation and is tested with six experiments.

Chapter 1 introduces the concept of the consumer role (including key assumptions and boundaries surrounding this construct) and why studying the consumer role is important. In chapter 2, the literature review, I provide a comprehensive review of role theory, including a discussion of the different perspectives within role theory and how they have been applied in marketing. In chapter 3 and 4, I examine the temporal orientation of the consumer role. Because of the strong association between consumerism and instant gratification, I propose the consumer role is present-oriented. This hypothesis and the mechanism behind consumer role impatience are tested in three studies. In chapter 5, I adopt a more comprehensive view of consumer role activation. Specifically, I explore whether a consumer role prime will activate a network of associations and whether this activation will spread outward through the network, beginning with more proximal associations and extending to more distal associations. In chapter 6, I examine the consequences of consumer role activation on outcomes more typically associated with the citizen role—voting intentions and actual voting behavior in the 2012 American Presidential Election. In chapter 7, contributions to role theory and consumer research are discussed.

Keywords

Consumer Role, Role Theory, Priming, Temporal Orientation, Boundaries

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Chapter 1

“If we take care of our guests and our cast members, the rest takes care of itself.”—Walt Disney World philosophy

“The magic formula that successful businesses have discovered is to treat customers like guests and employees like people.”—Tom Peters (business consultant and bestselling author)

1 Introduction

Despite the prominence of the consumer role in North American society and a discipline devoted to the study of people operating in this role (MacInnis & Folkes, 2010), little is known about what it means to enact the consumer role. Being a consumer in North America carries certain expectations and associations that, when activated, may alter cognition, perception, and behavior. To a certain extent, society has already begun to question the effects of activating the consumer role. Medicine, education, and politics have been the subject of many debates (and even a few ACR presidential addresses), as the more traditional, domain-specific roles (e.g., patient, student, citizen) are displaced by the increasingly pervasive consumer role. For example, as politicians and consulting firms encourage health care providers to treat their patients like consumers (e.g., Fam & Purdy, 2009), experts are concerned about patients’ abilities to cope with the wonders of consumer choice:

There’s something terribly wrong with the whole notion of patients as “consumers” and health care as simply a financial transaction. Medical care, after all, is an area in which crucial decisions—life and death decisions—must be made. Yet making such decisions intelligently requires a vast amount of specialized knowledge. Furthermore, those decisions often must be made under conditions in which the patient is incapacitated, under severe stress, or needs action immediately, with no time for discussion, let alone comparison shopping. (Krugman, 2011, p. A23)

This sentiment is echoed by Folkes (2002) in her ACR presidential address: “What a physician thinks is good for you as a patient decreases in importance if you can simply evaluate your treatment from a consumer perspective according to whether you, the patient, are satisfied.” Similarly, educators argue that treating students as consumers has led to

student entitlement, “an attitude marked by students’ beliefs that they are owed something in the educational experience apart from what they might earn from their effort” (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2010, p. 343). The student-as-consumer feels he or she is owed a certain level of success based on the expenses incurred—irrespective of the quality of his or her performance. Further, the commercialization of education has also transformed the perceived role of the professor: if students are consumers, then professors are their hired service providers (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010).

Even within traditional arenas of market exchange, business leaders are wary of evoking the consumer role. Disney and Amazon collectively refer to their clientele as “guests” and respectively refer to their employees as “cast members” and “hosts,” presumably in the hopes of avoiding the undesirable consequences of activating the consumer role. For example, an individual in the consumer role may be less forgiving of a service failure than an individual in the friend role (Wan, Hui, & Wyer, 2011).

Based on the above, it appears there is a strong suspicion that the consumer role can have powerful influences on behavior. Despite this, researchers have yet to employ a role theoretic approach to the study of the consumer role. There are two major obstacles to such an approach. First, role theory as a dramaturgical metaphor is incongruent with consumer researchers’ preference for rigorous, experimental work (i.e., the metaphor does not easily translate to testable hypotheses). Second, employing the consumer role as a theoretical construct requires the assumptions that the consumer role not only exists (i.e., there is a shared social conception of the typical North American consumer¹) but also that the consumer role is not all encompassing (i.e., the consumer role is not always active). With these two obstacles in mind (both of which will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2), I propose that the consumer role is best conceptualized as a network of associations subject to the cognitive rules of availability and accessibility. I argue that when a consumer role prime (i.e., a tangible, external stimulus associated with being a consumer, also referred to here as a consumer cue) is encountered, the network of associations should be activated and

¹ Roles are shaped by cultural expectations and are thus, limited by their cultural context (Lynch, 2007). Here, whenever I use the term *the* consumer role, I use it in reference to the North American consumer role.

behavior should be shaped accordingly. Exploring these associations, their triggers, and their influence on both consumer and non-consumer behaviors is, thus, the primary focus of my dissertation.

The contributions of this work are as follows. First and foremost, I present a role theoretic approach to the consumer role that lends itself to experimental study. This approach not only lays the foundation for future investigations of the consumer role, but it also addresses some of role theory's major shortcomings (e.g., a lack of empirical support for the proposition that roles influence behavior and a neglect of a more cognitive conceptualization of roles; Biddle, 1986; Lynch, 2007). Second, I identify key associations of the consumer role and demonstrate that various consumer role primes can activate these associations. Lastly, I am the first to demonstrate the real-world consequences of activating the consumer role in non-consumer domains.

In sum, my dissertation addresses several questions concerning the consumer role, including what is it and how it affects both traditional (e.g., product choice and satisfaction) and nontraditional consumer variables (e.g., votes for political candidates).

1.1 Outline of Dissertation

This dissertation is organized as follows. In chapter 2, the literature review, I begin with a review of role theory, my chosen theoretical lens. After a brief overview of role theory's basic premises, I provide a comprehensive discussion of the different perspectives within role theory and how they have been applied in marketing, followed by a detailed examination of its key terms. Next, I introduce the concept of the consumer role and argue that the consumer role is best conceptualized as a network of associations, that, when activated, can shape cognition, perception, and behavior. This theoretical discussion serves as the basis for six experiments that examine consumer role activation.

In chapter 3 and 4, I examine the temporal orientation of the consumer role. Because of the strong association between consumerism² and instant gratification, I propose the consumer role is present-oriented. This hypothesis and the mechanism behind consumer role impatience are tested in three studies. In chapter 5, I adopt a more comprehensive view of consumer role activation. Specifically, I examine multiple associations of the consumer role (not just present orientation) and find support for a mediator and two moderators of consumer role activation. In chapter 6, I explore the real world implications of activating the consumer role in a non-consumer domain. Here, I examine the consequences of consumer role activation on outcomes more typically associated with the citizen role—voting intentions and actual voting behavior in the 2012 American Presidential Election. Contributions and implications are discussed in chapter 7.

² The term “consumerism” can have two very different meanings (Swagler, 1994). Originally, the term was used to denote an ideology concerned with protecting consumers’ interests. However, as the term became more mainstream, its meaning shifted to excessive materialism. When I use the term, I mean the latter.

Chapter 2

“All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.”
—William Shakespeare, *As You Like It*

2 Literature Review

Role theory began as a theatrical metaphor. Just as actors’ personas change according to the character they are playing, role theory proposes that individuals’ personas change according to the role they are playing. It is important to note that role theory is not about the conduct of a particular individual; rather, its interest lies in the behavior associated with a specific role, the situational demands that will activate that role, and the patterned characteristics of people occupying that role (Biddle, 1979, 1986; Burr, 1972; Thomas & Biddle, 1966a).

Today, role theory is one of the most popular ideas in the social sciences. It frequently appears in basic texts of sociology and social psychology, and it appears regularly in journals across the social sciences. Much of its popularity stems from its theatrical metaphor. Not only is this metaphor easily understood, but it also adequately expresses widely held beliefs in a “doctrine of limited social determinism” (i.e., that human behavior is shaped by one's immediate social environment; Thomas & Biddle, 1966b, p. 4).

Consequently, role theory presents a meeting ground where psychologists, sociologists, and anthropologists can come together and share common terms and ideas.

Perhaps the most famous application of role theory, the Stanford prison experiment is a perfect illustration of how roles can change behavior (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973). Though none of the participants had ever been in a prison, randomly assigning them to either the role of a prisoner or a guard and situating them in a simulated prison environment for an extended period of time drastically altered their behavior. None of the participants received training, yet, within a week, the “simulated prison developed into a psychologically compelling prison environment” (p. 69). The guards became aggressive, threatening, and dehumanizing toward the prisoners, and the prisoners became passive, depressed, helpless, and self-deprecating. Just one day into the experiment, the guards decided all of the

prisoners' rights (including sleeping and eating) were privileges granted for obedient behavior. Good behavior was "rewarded" with approval to eat, sleep, talk, drink a glass of water, wear glasses, or go the bathroom. And though the prisoners always outnumbered the guards on staff (nine versus three), they never attempted to overpower the guards. Rather, they became "zombie-like"—they avoided engaging in any sort of purposeful behavior as an attempt to escape the arbitrary reactions of the guards:

A question by a prisoner as often elicited derogation and aggression as it did a rational answer. Smiling at a joke could be punished in the same way that failing to smile might be. An individual acting in defiance of the rules could bring punishment to innocent cell partners... to himself, or to all. (p. 95)

Unfortunately, the Stanford prison experiment is a rare example of experimental work testing the basic propositions of role theory. Most applications of role theory focus on derived role concepts, such as role conflict, role stress, and role ambiguity, as opposed to testing the fundamental assumptions upon which role theory is built (Biddle, 1986). Part of the issue stems from a general neglect of basic processes and the resulting inadequate formalization of its assumptions and derived ideas (Biddle, 1979). For example, though role theory states roles change people's behavior, the mechanism behind this effect has never been formally hypothesized nor tested.

The other primary culprit is confusion over fundamental issues, such as what constitutes a role and explanations for role phenomena. Much of this confusion stems from the simultaneous development of role concepts in different disciplines and from the early proponents of role theory who, because of differences in their disciplinary origins, subject matter, and basic assumptions, used role terms in different ways. Unfortunately, these differences persist today and are further exacerbated by the existence of other theories using similar terms for different constructs. In an attempt to alleviate some of this confusion, I provide an overview of the origins of role theory, the different perspectives in role theory, specifically highlighting how each has been used in marketing, and end by clarifying what a role is and is not.

2.1 Origins of Role Theory

Role theory cannot be traced to one seminal thinker or article; rather, it evolved gradually as similar interests arose across the social sciences. The gradual development of role theory can be broken down into three chronological stages: the *precursive* stage, the *conceptual development* stage, and the *empirical research stage* (Biddle, 1979). The precursive stage began in the late 19th century when a number of influential thinkers began to express views of human behavior consistent with a role theoretic perspective. For example, Cooley (1902) wrote about the “looking-glass self,” Durkheim (1897) argued that the “collective consciousness” (shared norms, beliefs, and attitudes) holds a society together; and Dewey (1922) examined the function of habitual behavior. (See Thomas & Biddle, 1966a for a decade-by-decade listing of the major precursors.) And although the term *role* was not used to denote a theoretical construct until the mid-1930s, these “precursors” of role theory are, nevertheless, considered instrumental in its conception (Biddle, 1979; Thomas & Biddle, 1966b). Today, many of the precursors’ original concepts survive in or have modern counterparts in role theory. For example, Dewey’s (1922) interest in habit and conduct is reflected in role expectations.

In the 1930s, contemporary role theory was born. As role concepts were formalized and elaborated, the role perspective of the previous decades gradually gave way to the systematic study of role related phenomena. Included in this period of “conceptual development” are the influential works of Mead (1934), Moreno (1934), and Linton (1936). These works were the first to use role and related terms to denote theoretical constructs and to study social problems, and their ideas, terminology, and research questions survive today (Thomas & Biddle, 1966b). However, it was not until after World War II that role concepts started to appear in empirical research.

In the third and current stage of role theory’s development, role concepts have been applied to empirical research in many different contexts in many different disciplines. The language of role theory continues to appear in scientific publications, textbooks, and the writings of professionals interested in behavior, action, and change. Most of this research, however, has been concerned with practical problems (e.g., problems associated with education, mental

health, or adjusting to occupations) rather than role theory's basic propositions (Biddle, 1979, 1986; Thomas & Biddle, 1966a).

2.2 Different Perspectives in Role Theory

Over the years, the simultaneous and relatively segregated development of role-related terms, propositions, and theories across disciplines has given rise to distinct perspectives in role theory. Though all use the concept of role, these different perspectives are based on different assumptions, employ different conceptualizations, and ask fundamentally different questions (figure 1). My work is best situated in cognitive role theory—a social psychological perspective which seeks to examine the relationship between role expectations and behavior. However, given that this perspective is relatively new to marketing and that most of the role theory literature in marketing adopts a different perspective, I now provide a quick discussion of six other perspectives in role theory, highlighting how each has been applied in marketing. (See appendix A for a list of role theory applications in marketing and the associated role theory perspective.)

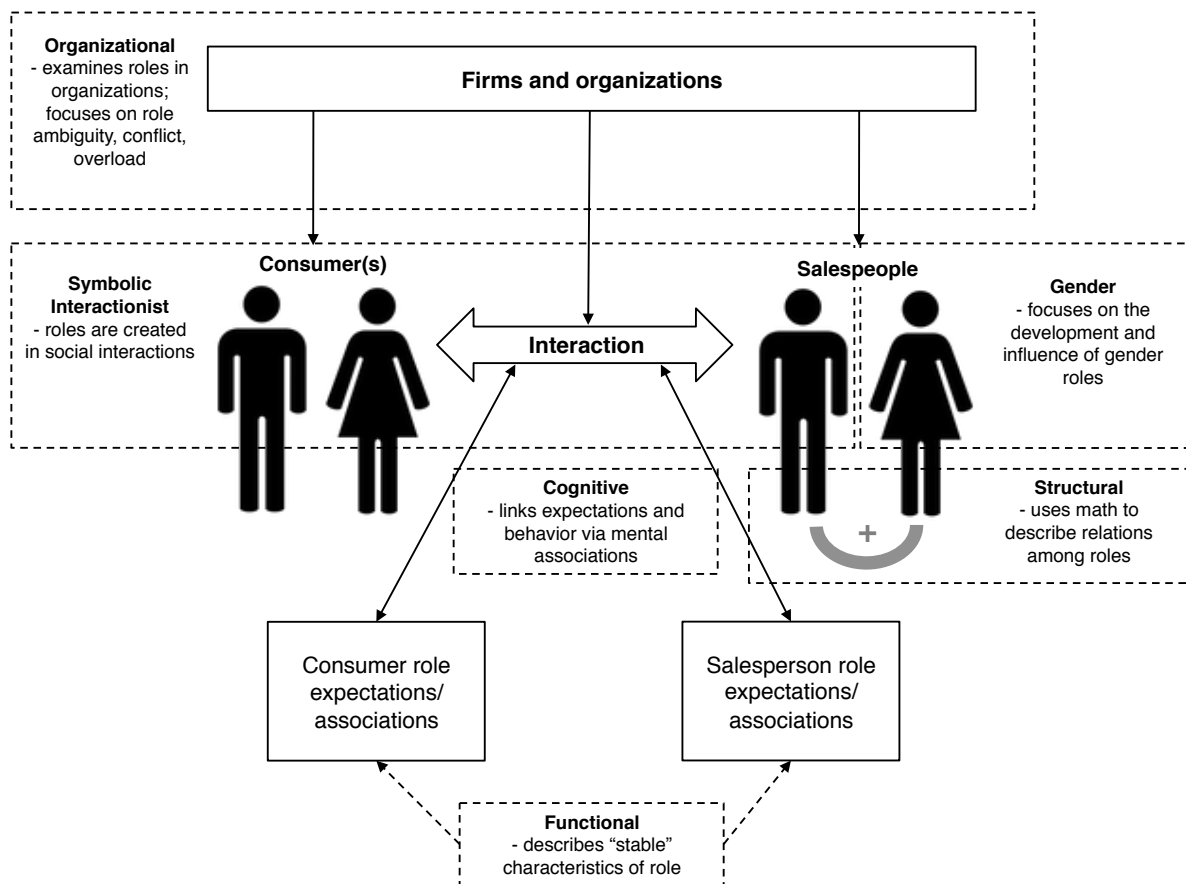


Figure 1: Different perspectives in role theory applied to the consumer-salesperson interaction (adapted from Guirguis & Chewning, 2005).

2.2.1 Functional Role Theory

Functional role theory began in anthropology when Linton (1936) distinguished between status (i.e., position) and role. According to Linton (1936), a position is a collection of rights and duties, which when put into action, constitute a role performance. Consequently, functional role theorists believed that positions and roles are inseparable—one could not exist without the other (a point of view that has since been discredited). Consistent with this belief, work in functional role theory tends to focus on describing “the characteristic *behaviors* of persons who occupy *social positions* within a *stable* social system” and explaining why these systems are stable (italics added for emphasis; Biddle, 1986, p. 70). According to functional role theory, conformity within positions and stability within a system are ultimately brought about by roles—socially shared normative expectations that

dictate behavior. Importantly, functional theorists view roles as consisting only of norms that apply to the performance of specific functions.

In marketing, functional role theory has been used to understand consumer role socialization. This literature defines the consumer role and seeks to understand how children learn to function as consumers. For example, Ward (1974) limited consumer role enactment to “the physical act of purchasing, or... activities specifically involved in purchase decisions—shopping, talking to others about products and brands, and weighing purchase criteria” (p. 3); Moschis and Churchill (1978) proposed the consumer role includes a large number of consumer-related skills, knowledge, attitudes, attributes, and behavior; and in her review of 25 years of consumer socialization research, John (1999) presents a conceptual framework that maps consumer socialization stages onto the development of specific cognitive and social skills.

Up until the mid 1970s, functional role theory was the most popular perspective in role theory. Its popularity waned, however, when it was pointed out that roles are not always associated with identified social positions or functions; that roles can consist of more than normative expectations; that not all normative expectations are shared; and that social systems are not stable (Biddle, 1986). Though the consumer role fits many concepts associated with a functional role theory perspective (e.g., the consumer role serves a function in society, and people are socialized into the role of the consumer), this perspective’s focus on describing characteristic behaviors is not suited to questions regarding how consumer role activation influences cognition, perception, and behavior.

2.2.2 Structural Role Theory

Because structural role theory was also greatly influenced by Linton (1936), its interests are similar to those of functional role theory. For example, roles are conceived of as patterned behaviors attached to social positions within stable organizations. However, the approach is significantly different. Structural role theorists seek to mathematically express structured role relationships. The focus is not on behavioral norms or expectations; rather, attention is focused on using mathematical symbols to describe the structure of relationships among roles. Though structural role theory brings clarity and explicit logic to the study of roles, its

rigid nature, limiting assumptions, and use of mathematical symbols has hampered its adoption. In the words of Biddle (1986), “one wonders whether the gain is worth the effort” (p. 73).

Though there are no explicit applications of structural role theory in marketing, marketers’ work on networks—both social and organizational—capture the general essence of this approach. For example, Reingen and Kernan (1986) use network analysis to study referral behavior and word of mouth; Reingen, Foster, Brown, and Seidman (1984) examine how different types of network relationships (e.g., roommate, friend, neighbor) interact with product type to produce brand congruence; Ward and Reingen (1990) apply network analysis to the study of social structure, shared knowledge, and group choices; and Sirsi, Ward, and Reingen (1996) examine how the strength of social ties and their network structure affect sharing within consumer subcultures. More recently, Lee, Cotte, and Noseworthy (2009) use network analysis to examine how an individual’s position in a social network affects his or her opinion leadership and susceptibility to influence.

2.2.3 Symbolic Interactionist Role Theory

Contrary to behaviorism, which views all behavior as a conditioned and automatic response to environmental stimuli, symbolic interaction posits that people first *interpret* the actions of others and then respond accordingly. Consequently, the response is seen as a function of the meaning attached to the action, which is mediated largely by symbols (a stimulus with a learned meaning and value). This perspective first encountered roles in Mead’s (1934) posthumous *Mind, Self, and Society*. In an effort to understand problems of social interaction, the self, and socialization, Mead proposed “role taking” is essential to the development of a well functioning society. By “taking the role of the other,” people are able to imagine how others will interpret their behavior, making cooperative social action possible. In addition to taking the role of a specific other, people may also take the role of a “generalized other” by imagining how specific groups (e.g., students, consumers, or family members) may respond to their behavior. Lastly, Mead believed that an individual’s self-concept is largely determined through role taking and imagining how others evaluate oneself.

According to symbolic interactionists, roles are neither fixed nor prescribed; rather, they evolve during social interactions as a reflection of norms, attitudes, contextual demands, and the actors' interpretations of the situation. Research in this tradition tends to focus on roles in informal interactions and the relationship between roles and the self-concept (Biddle 1986). Today, the latter is best recognized as identity theory (Stryker, 1968; Stryker & Burke, 2000; Stryker & Serpe, 1994).

In the early 1980s, Solomon (1983) introduced symbolic interactionist role theory to marketing. In his conceptual piece on product symbolism, Solomon (1983) proposed that products are often purchased for their ability to contribute to successful role enactment. He argued this was especially true for new and/or unfamiliar roles. Specifically, the less competent an actor feels in his or her role enactment, the more likely he or she is to rely upon product cues to signal role-appropriate behavior. In such situations, the adage, "you are what you wear," may seem especially relevant.

In the years that followed, this perspective became the dominant role theoretic approach in marketing. In addition to furthering research on product symbolism, its emphasis on informal interactions and the concurrent evolution of roles made it ideally suited to studying the many roles that are created during consumer interactions. For example, it has been used to characterize service encounters as role performances (Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994; Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985); to understand the various roles gift-givers seek to express via gift selection (Otnes, Lowrey, & Kim, 1993); to describe the roles that may be assumed by strangers interacting in a consumer context (McGrath & Otnes, 1995); to examine how retail environments can be designed to elicit specific roles (Sherry et al., 2004); and to even reframe the role of consumer (Deighton, 1992). Also included under the symbolic interactionist role theory umbrella are marketers' various applications of identity theory. For example, researchers have examined how various aspects of role identities (e.g., identity synergy, identity salience) affect consumers' relationships with organizations (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Fombelle, Jarvis, Ward, & Ostrom, 2012). Importantly, identity theory is distinct from *social* identity theory, which is more prevalent in the marketing literature (e.g., Berger & Heath, 2007; Berger & Rand, 2008; Chan, Berger, & Van Boven, 2012; Dommer & Swaminathan, 2013; Forehand, Deshpande, & Reed II, 2003;

Reed II, 2002, 2004; White, Argo, & Sengupta, 2012). The distinction between these theories will be elaborated on further under the heading, “A Role Is Not a Social Identity.”

Though still popular today, symbolic interactionism is repeatedly criticized for “its tendencies to use fuzzy and inapplicable definitions, to recite cant, and to ignore the findings of relevant empirical research” (Biddle, 1986, p. 72; see also Guirguis & Chewning, 2005). Because it lacks formal propositions, this perspective primarily accompanies ethnographic work and is rarely subject to experimental analysis (Guirguis & Chewning, 2005). Such criticisms are especially damaging to role theory in general because of its presumed identification with symbolic interactionism.

2.2.4 Organizational Role Theory

Organizational theorists have developed their own version of role theory that focuses on pre-planned, hierarchical, task-oriented social structures. Just as in functional role theory, roles are believed to be associated with identified social positions and to be generated by normative expectations (Biddle, 1986). Within any organization, there are multiple sources of expectations. For example, expectations may represent the official demands of the organization, the specific requests of an immediate supervisor, and/or the pressures of informal groups. Consequently, much of the work in organizational role theory focuses on understanding and managing problems associated with managing role expectations. For instance, role ambiguity results when role expectations are unclear; role conflict occurs when role expectations are incompatible; and role overload occurs when there are too many expectations and not enough time (Guirguis & Chewning, 2005).

In marketing, organizational role concepts have been used to understand how retirees use consumption to adopt new roles (Schau, Gilly, & Wolfenbarger, 2009), the pros and cons of different relationship strategies (Heide & Wathne, 2006; Homburg, Müller, & Klarmann, 2011), the effects of role stressors on salespersons and frontline employees (Singh, 2000; Walker, Churchill, & Ford, 1977), and whether employed married women experience role overload and are subsequently more likely to engage in convenience consumption (Reilly, 1982).

2.2.5 Gender Role Theory

In 1987, Eagly introduced gender role theory—a hybrid of social role theory and theories of social influence that seeks to explain sex differences in social behavior. According to gender role theory, sex-differentiated behavior results primarily from the allocation of men and women into different labor roles. Throughout history, because of various physical attributes, men tended to possess roles characterized by agentic traits (e.g., assertive, controlling, and confident), while women tended to possess roles characterized by communal traits (e.g., affectionate, nurturing, and helpful). Eventually, these traits transcended the specific work roles and began to dictate how each sex should behave in general.

In marketing, gender role theory is most prevalent in advertising research. For example, a number of researchers have examined how gender roles are used to sell products (Elliott, Eccles, & Hodgson, 1993). Others have examined the degree to which consumers adhere to and/or prescribe gender roles and how that affects their willingness to use gendered (i.e., masculine or feminine) brands (Alreck, Settle, & Belch, 1992).

2.2.6 Cognitive Role Theory

The last major perspective in role theory, and the perspective guiding this work, is housed in cognitive social psychology. Termed cognitive role theory, this perspective is focused on understanding the relationship between role associations and behavior (Collier & Callero, 2005; Lynch, 2007). Because the traditional role theory perspectives (specifically, functional, structuralist, symbolic interactionist, and organizational) emphasize behavior over cognition, we have little understanding of the underlying *process* by which roles influence perception, cognition, and behavior (Biddle, 1979, 1986; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995; Solomon, 1983; Thomas & Biddle, 1966b). Further, with the exception of the Stanford Prison experiment, there are no experimental tests of the basic proposition of role theory—that roles shape behavior. One reason for this gap is role theorists' failure to specify a mechanism that links roles to behavior (Hogg et al., 1995).

Consistent with recent advances in cognitive role theory (Collier & Callero, 2005), I argue that roles are best conceptualized as mental schemas (i.e., associative networks of constructs) subject to the cognitive rules of availability and accessibility. For nearly two

decades, consumer researchers have used semantic activation and associative networks to explain how mere exposure to situational cues (i.e., priming) can nonconsciously activate mental representations, such as traits, stereotypes, and goals (e.g., Aggarwal & McGill, 2012; Bargh, 2002; Chartrand, Huber, Shiv, & Tanner, 2008; Fitzsimons, Chartrand, & Fitzsimons, 2008). Drawing upon theories of the automatic perception-behavior link, this work is grounded in the assumption that the repeated and consistent activation of mental representations in response to certain stimuli or situational cues results in highly accessible, well-established associations that can be activated without conscious awareness (Bargh, 1990; Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001). To the extent that roles are conceptualized as associative networks of constructs associated with stimuli or situational cues “in which they have been repeatedly and consistently activated” (Sela & Shiv, 2009, p. 419), mere perception of role-related stimuli should be capable of activating the role.

By adopting a cognitive role theoretic perspective, studying the effects of role enactment becomes a two-step process. Since roles are conceptualized as a network of associations and role enactment is conceptualized as the activation of these associations, identifying shared associations is an essential first step. Once an association has been identified, it can then be subject to experimental analysis by exposing participants to role primes and measuring outcomes indicative of the association. This two-step process is at the heart of this dissertation and will become more evident in my ensuing discussion of the consumer role.

I now conclude my review of role theory by briefly clarifying key concepts in role theory. Because this work is situated in a cognitive role theory perspective, my conceptualization of what a role is, and is not, is shaped accordingly.

2.3 What a Role Is and Is Not

Broadly speaking, roles are defined as a socially shared set of expectations attached to a certain position. Expectations is a general term, and it includes everything from “specific goals, values, beliefs, norms, interaction styles, and time horizons” that are expected of an individual performing that role (Ashforth, Kreiner, & Fugate, 2000, p. 475). Guided by the cognitive role theory perspective, I argue for a more cognitive conceptualization of roles. Specifically, I propose that roles are best conceptualized as an associative network of

constructs related to a specific social position. When a role-relevant stimuli is encountered, the associative network becomes more accessible and consequently, more able to influence cognition and behavior.

Roles can be acquired based on the individual's actions and decisions or can be ascribed by others based on observable and immutable attributes (e.g., gender, age, and ethnicity). Roles can even embody cultural values (e.g., yuppie, hipster, and simplifier; Alreck, 2000; Biddle, 1979; Zurcher, 1983). Because roles are shared social conceptions, they provide social interactions with a measure of predictability that not only helps individuals interact more effectively but also guides the role-taker's behavior in unfamiliar or ambiguous situations (Lynch, 2007; Solomon, 1983).

Metaphorically, roles can be thought of as uniforms. Uniforms are associated with certain positions, and when an individual dons a uniform, he or she is subject to certain expectations. For the most part, anyone can put on the uniform, yet how it looks will vary depending on the individual. In other words, just as actors bring their own personal flavor to their various characters, people will vary in their personal portrayal of roles (Hogg et al., 1995; Stryker, 1968). Further, though the first wearing of the uniform may feel uncomfortable, it tends to fit better with each subsequent wear. The important point is that, like uniforms, roles exist independently of the self and are discussed without reference to any particular individual (e.g., a nurse should...).

2.3.1 A Role Is Not a Position

Positions are sometimes confused with roles. Though a position often implies a role and a role often implies a position, they are distinct and separable entities. Positions are a unit of social structure; they almost always refer to “a collectively recognized category of persons from whom the basis for such differentiation is their common attribute, their common behavior, or the common reactions of others toward them” (Thomas & Biddle, 1966a, p. 29). Positions can be identified based on behavior (e.g., nurse, baker), physical features (e.g., female, Caucasian), traits (e.g., beauty, intellect), prior experiences (e.g., Olympic athlete, alumnus), and treatment accorded by others (e.g., scapegoat). Though positions virtually always give rise to roles, the term “position” simply implies a label—its sole

purpose is to classify. (In this sense, it has very little theoretical usefulness.) In contrast, a “role” is defined by all the behaviors believed to be characteristic of a specific position. The important distinction is that while most positions give rise to roles, roles are classifications of behavior and the expectations that give rise to such behavior; positions are classifications of people (Biddle, 1979).

2.3.2 A Role Is Not an Identity

Identity theory is a microsociological theory of role choice behavior (Stryker, 2007). It shares the same paradigmatic roots as role theory, yet its emphasis is distinct. Whereas role theory focuses on roles as shared social conceptions, identity theory’s interest lies in how an individual’s self-concept is influenced by his or her social roles and the personal identities he or she attaches to those roles. According to Stryker (1968), the father of identity theory, role identities are self-conceptions that people apply to themselves because of the role they occupy (i.e., role-specific self-descriptions). Each role identity becomes a distinct component of the self,³ ultimately contributing to a self that is as multifaceted as the social world we live in. Importantly, the distinction between roles and identities is observable in differences between their corresponding mental schemas (i.e., mental network of associations). Whereas a role schema links the role to traits and behaviors characteristic of that role (e.g., *A recycler is responsible*), an identity schema links the self to traits and behaviors characteristic of that role (e.g., *Because I am a recycler, I am responsible*) (Collier & Callero, 2005). Though both schemas often develop simultaneously, the role schema can precede the identity schema (Collier & Callero, 2005).

In identity theory, the emphasis is on understanding when and why people choose to enact different identities. As Stryker (2007) explains, “The prototypical question addressed is why one person takes his or her children to the zoo on a free weekend afternoon, while another person chooses to spend that time on the golf course with friends” (p. 1088). The basic proposition of identity theory is that such choices reflect the relative locations of the

³ Our self is our “cognitive and affective understanding of who and what we are... encompass[es] such things as role identities, personal attributes, relationships, fantasies, possession, and other symbols that individuals use for the purposes of self-creation and self-understanding” (Schouten, 1991, p. 413).

identities in an individual's identity hierarchy. Specifically, the higher/more prominent the identity, the more likely it is to be enacted. To date, most of the literature in identity theory concerns how role identities are organized within the self and how variations in inter-individual identity structures affect behavior. For example, Stryker and Serpe (1994) propose a hierarchy of salience, where the most committed role identities reign supreme.

2.3.3 A Role Is Not a Self

Selves are more similar to identities than they are to roles. Like identities, selves are internalized self-conceptions that ultimately contribute to one's overall self-concept. The key distinction lies in the source of the identity. Whereas role identities are role-based (identity-as-internalized-role), selves are trait-based (identity-as-traits) (Stryker, 2007). For example, consumer researchers have shown that people have interdependent and dependent selves (Mandel, 2003).

Additional differences between the concepts include their disciplinary origins (psychology supports multiple selves; sociology supports multiple identities) and fundamental assumptions about the existence of a true self (Marks & MacDermid, 1996; Stryker & Serpe, 1994). While identity theorists assume the existence of a single, "real" self that transcends many roles and situations, proponents of multiple selves make no such assumption (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Instead, multiple selves are equally valid versions of one another. Though it is normal to have multiple selves, cultural norms often pressure us to maintain one consistent self. In other words, though one self may become dominant, it is still not the "true" self (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

2.3.4 A Role Is Not a Social Identity

Social identity theory draws on the concepts of self-enhancement and categorization to understand the motives behind and the processes by which people identify as members of larger social categories (e.g., Hogg, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Though social identity theory typically focuses on "large-scale category memberships such as ethnicity, sex, race, and nationality" (Hogg & White, 2005, p. 264), they can also include shared traits or similar interests (Aquino & Reed II, 2002). The primary focus is how one's membership to a social category impacts the inferences they make about themselves and their evaluations of in-

group and out-group members (Hogg et al., 1995). One of the most essential differences between role theory and social identity theory is that they propose different mechanisms for changes in identity-related behaviors: role theory attributes such changes to role transitions (i.e., a different role is activated); social identity theory attributes such changes to changes in category-prevalence.

In marketing, much of the identity research is social identity research. For example, Escalas and Bettman (2005) find that brands associated with an in-group enhance self-brand connections; Berger and Rand (2008) show that associating risky health behaviors with an out-group may improve public health, as people will avoid the behaviors to avoid signaling the undesirable identity; and Dommer and Swaminathan (2013) propose the endowment effect should be stronger for goods associated with an in-group and weaker for goods associated with an out-group. (See also Berger & Heath, 2007; Bolton & Reed II, 2004; Chan et al., 2012; Escalas & Bettman, 2003; Reed II, 2002, 2004; White & Argo, 2009; White et al., 2012; White & Dahl, 2007.)

Though there has generally been little interaction between the two theories, research is starting to acknowledge that the theories can co-exist and even complement one another. For example, in recent work on the “signature effect,” role identities (e.g., photographer, runner) and social identities (e.g., member of the business students group) are treated as equally important components of the self with distinct consequences for behavior (Kettle & Häubl, 2011). Whereas activating role identities resulted in increased engagement when shopping in a relevant product domain, activating social identities resulted in increased divergence from an out-group and increased conformity with an in-group. Role identities triggered role congruent behavior; social identities triggered an increased sense of group belonging.

2.3.5 A Role Is Not a Stereotype

A stereotype is an attribute (e.g., a personality trait) thought to characterize members of a certain social group (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Wheeler & Petty, 2001). Stereotypes can be positive or negative and can refer to out-groups (other-stereotypes) or one’s own in-groups (self-stereotypes). They can be formed about many types of social groups, yet most research has focused on stereotypes dealing with gender, age, and ethnicity. According to Wheeler

and Petty's (2001) review of the effects of stereotype activation on behavior, 84% of published experiments involving stereotypes concern groups defined by basic demographics. In this way, stereotypes are similar to social identities in that each concerns categorization and inferences based on master statuses. Stereotypes also tend to have an evaluative component, hence the term's negative connotation (Steele, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995; Wheeler & Petty, 2001).

Stereotypes significantly affect how people perceive others. For example, once activated, stereotypes can bias how an individual interprets ambiguous behavior (e.g., when a suspect reaches inside his coat pocket, police are more likely to perceive a gun when the suspect is African American as opposed to Caucasian) (Payne, 2006) and how an individual explains social events (e.g., when an individual is a stay-at-home parent, people may be more likely to think it was due to a lack of viable employment when the parent is a man as opposed to a woman) (Bodenhausen, Todd, & Becker, 2007).

Stereotypes also affect people's own behavior. Self-relevant stereotypes affect behavior through stereotype threat. Essentially, the threat of being negatively stereotyped can lead to emotional distress and task-related anxiety, ultimately resulting in performance decrements (Steele & Aronson, 1995). For example, when women are reminded of their gender prior to taking an exam, they perform significantly worse than men on the math and science components (Steele, 1997). More generally, both self- and other-stereotypes can affect behavior by increasing the accessibility of related constructs. In essence, it is a form of semantic activation (Sela & Shiv, 2009). Activating a stereotype activates its associated traits, which then activate behavioral representations (Dijksterhuis & Bargh, 2001). For example, people primed with elderly stereotypes walked and reacted slower than their counterparts in the control condition (Bargh, Chaiken, Raymond, & Hymes, 1996; Dijksterhuis, Spears, & Lépinasse, 2001).

Conceptually, roles can be distinguished from stereotypes according to their target. Whereas roles concern social positions, stereotypes concern group membership. In addition, stereotypes can be part of a role. Roles contain both beliefs about how someone actually behaves (i.e., stereotypes), as well as how someone *should* behave. Thus, roles have "a

prescriptive element not traditionally included in the stereotype construct” (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 574).

Now that I have clarified what a role is (and is not) from a cognitive role theory perspective, I next turn to discussing how role theory can be used to inform consumer researchers’ understanding of how being a consumer influences behavior—both within and beyond traditional consumer domains.

2.4 The Consumer Role

Despite its obvious centrality to the field of consumer behavior (e.g., the field was recently defined as the study of the consumer role; MacInnis & Folkes, 2010), role theoretic approaches to the study of the consumer role are surprisingly few and far between. The earliest insights originate in the consumer socialization literature where researchers explored how children develop the skills necessary to perform this role. For example, Ward (1974) limited consumer role enactment to “the physical act of purchasing, or... activities specifically involved in purchase decisions—shopping, talking to others about products and brands, and weighing purchase criteria” (p. 3); Moschis and Churchill (1979) proposed the consumer role includes a large number of consumer-related skills, knowledge, attitudes, attributes, and behavior; and in her review of 25 years of consumer socialization research, John (1999) presents a conceptual framework that maps consumer socialization stages onto the development of specific cognitive and social skills. As children mature both cognitively and socially, their knowledge of brands, products, decision-making strategies, persuasion tactics, pricing, and consumption motives and values develop accordingly. For example, at the perceptual stage (ages 3-7), children tend to make consumer decisions based on very limited information, usually a single perceptually salient attribute. At the analytical stage (ages 7-11), children’s newly developed ability to think symbolically allows them to approach decision-making from the perspective of a parent or friend and adapt accordingly. At the reflective stage (ages 11-16), children’s newfound desire to shape their own identity leads to increased consideration of the social aspects of consumption decisions.

Most of the remaining insights into the consumer role are indirect. For example, the newly developed self-sufficiency theory of money demonstrates that priming individuals with

money leads to more independent behavior (Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006, 2008) and recent work entitled, “Cuing Consumerism,” demonstrates that situational cues, such as desirable consumer goods and framing a task as a ‘consumer’ task, can trigger a materialistic mind-set (Bauer, Wilkie, Kim, & Bodenhausen, 2012). Though this series of articles does not directly examine the consumer role, their findings indirectly support the notion that consumer role primes can trigger consumer role activation. If money and the other stimuli used in the aforementioned work can prime the consumer role, it is plausible their effects are actually indicative of consumer role activation.

Importantly, studying consumer role activation also requires accounting for an important moderator: consumer role boundaries (Whelan, 2010; Whelan, Goode, & Cotte, 2011, 2013). Consumer role boundaries are strategies individuals use to manage when and how they respond to consumption cues. Physical boundaries include rules and behaviors designed to manage when and where consumption cues are encountered, and monetary boundaries involve the use of budgets and other monetary constraints to manage when an individual considers the purchase and acquisition of marketplace goods. When role boundaries are weaker, role activation should be mindless and automatic. In contrast, when role boundaries are stronger, role activation should be attenuated (Ashforth et al., 2000).

Thus, in support of a more explicit examination of the consumer role, I adopt a cognitive role theory perspective and propose that the consumer role is best conceptualized as a network of associations subject to the rules of availability and accessibility. When a consumer role prime (i.e., a tangible, external stimulus associated with being a consumer) is encountered, the network of associations should be activated, and cognition, perception, and behavior should be shaped accordingly. Importantly, my conceptualization of the consumer role requires some significant limitations in order to be theoretically useful. First and foremost, my investigation of the consumer role as a network of associations is limited to the North American consumer role and the associations that North Americans attach to being a consumer. In other words, it is bound by culturally available schemata (Lynch, 2007). Second, consistent with early discussions of the consumer role (Ward, 1974), my conceptualization of the consumer role assumes the position of consumer is attached primarily to the pursuit and acquisition of marketplace goods. This is when the consumer

role is likely to be most relevant and consequently, most likely to influence behavior. Without these limitations, the consumer role risks becoming all-encompassing and theoretically useless, “as virtually any activity requires some level of consumption” (Shrum et al., 2013, p. 1180).

2.5 The Current Research

In my dissertation, I continue my exploration of the consumer role by examining the temporal orientation of the consumer role (chapter 3 and 4), the multifaceted nature of the consumer role (chapter 5), and the consequences of activating the consumer role in a non-consumer domain (chapter 6). By doing so, I hope to demonstrate the usefulness of a cognitive role theoretic approach to the study of the consumer role.

Chapter 3 establishes the basic relationship between the consumer role and a present orientation. Study 1 uses a between-subjects design to demonstrate that when individuals are exposed to a consumer role prime, they report a steeper discount function and a stronger preference for sooner rather than larger but delayed monetary rewards. Chapter 4 employs two studies to examine the underlying mechanism behind the temporal orientation of the consumer role—that is, *why* is the consumer role present-oriented? Currently, the literature supports two competing arguments as to why primes can activate consumption impatience: the prime can either increase individuals’ valuations of an immediate reward or decrease their valuations of a delayed reward. In two studies, I examine which of these explanations best accounts for consumer role impatience.

Chapter 5 points out a limitation of the first two empirical chapters—how do we know that the consumer role is being activated and not just a present orientation? I propose that consumer role activation should be supported by the simultaneous activation of multiple traits that are all associated with being a consumer (exchange orientation, present orientation, and materialism). Study 4 supports this hypothesis and demonstrates that the effect of the consumer role prime on the associated traits is mediated by thoughts directly related to the consumer role prime. This activation pattern from proximal to distal associations is consistent with established models of priming effects.

Chapter 6 provides further support for a cognitive role theoretic approach by demonstrating the real world consequences of activating the consumer role in a non-consumer domain. In two studies, I test the effect of a consumer role prime on voting intentions (study 5) and actual voting behavior (study 6) in the 2012 American Presidential Election.

In sum, using six studies, my dissertation seeks to demonstrate (a) that the consumer role can and should be conceptualized as a network of association, (b) that this network of associations can be activated by consumer role primes, and (c) that consumer role activation can have substantial implications for both consumer and non-consumer behaviors.

Chapter 3

Nowism: Consumers' ingrained lust for instant gratification
—<http://trendwatching.com/trends/nowism/>

3 The Consumer Role Is Impatient

Consumers want what they want and they want it *now*. This emphasis on immediate gratification, coupled with diminished concern for the future, has resulted in numerous problems of self-control, from the odd impulsive purchase to record-low levels of savings and record-high levels of obesity (Komlos, Smith, & Bogin, 2004; Schor, 1998). For many, advertising is the obvious culprit (Barber, 2006; Hayward, 2007; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002; Schor, 1998):

The whole thrust of manipulative and want-stimulating advertising is toward immediate gratification. While the advertising establishment has done an excellent job of proclaiming the value of present consumption, it has said very little about the value of later consumption and present saving. (Wallace, 1973, p. 473)

Recently, research has demonstrated that individuals' desire for immediate gratification is not as consistent as these critics would lead us to believe. Situational influences, such as appetitive stimuli and cultural icons, can trigger a more present-oriented temporal orientation, resulting in more impulsive behavior and an increased willingness to pay for immediate gratification (Chen, Ng, & Rao, 2005; Li, 2008). Thus, the question becomes, is there something about consuming that makes individuals more present-oriented than they otherwise might be? In other words, is a lust for instant gratification so ingrained in cultural expectations of consuming that it can actually shift individuals' temporal orientation?

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. I begin with a review of the literature on temporal orientation, highlighting recent work on consumption impatience and support for my hypothesis concerning the temporal orientation of the consumer role. To test this hypothesis, study 1 uses a between-subjects design to explore the effect of a consumer role prime on individuals' temporal discount rate.

3.1 Temporal Orientation

Temporal orientation captures an individual's focus on immediate versus long-term consequences (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999). Present-oriented individuals are focused on the present. They tend to succumb to hedonic impulses, as they pursue immediate gratification at the expense of their long-term interests. Consequently, they are often referred to as shortsighted, present-biased, and impatient—terms that I will use interchangeably throughout this dissertation. In contrast, future-oriented individuals are farsighted and demonstrate excessive concern for the future. They will deprive themselves of indulgences, as they focus on acting responsibly and behaving in their best long-term interest.

In general, a future-oriented temporal perspective is associated with many positive outcomes, including higher socioeconomic status and academic achievement, and fewer riskier behaviors. In contrast, individuals with a present-oriented temporal perspective in North America's predominantly future-oriented society are at high risk of many negative outcomes, including substance abuse, pathological gambling, aggression, and high levels of debt (Joireman, Anderson, & Strathman, 2003; Joireman, Sprott, & Spangenberg, 2005; Petry, 2001; Strathman, Gleicher, Boninger, & Edwards, 1994).

In order to obtain the “best of both worlds,” Zimbardo and Boyd (1999) argue a balanced temporal orientation is the most psychologically and physically healthy orientation for both individuals and society. Balance is defined as the ability to switch among temporal orientations rather than display a temporal bias that is not adaptive to situational changes. Balance is optimal as adopting a future orientation could help curb short-term impulses, while a present orientation would prevent over-control and permit individuals to enjoy the here and now, thereby minimizing long-term regret (Kivetz & Keinan, 2006).

To date, empirical work on temporal orientation is most strongly associated with economists' models of intertemporal preferences. In fact, the hyperbolic discount function may be the most well known phenomenon in the literature on intertemporal preferences. Thus, before I dive into the marketing literature on consumption impatience, I now take a brief foray into the economic literature on intertemporal preferences.

3.1.1 Modeling Intertemporal Preferences

In economics, modeling intertemporal preferences requires two unique parameters: an individual's temporal discount rate (δ) and preference for immediate gratification (β). Temporal discount rate reflects how much an individual diminishes the value of future outcomes. A high discount rate means an individual is more present-oriented. A low discount rate means an individual is more future-oriented. On its own, discount rate can be used to model long-term, *time-consistent* intertemporal preferences. Assuming an individual will make the same trade-offs between two moments regardless of when she is asked (i.e., that people discount exponentially), a higher discount rate would simply imply a more present-oriented individual. However, the assumption of time-consistent preferences is greatly questioned, as people tend to be much more sensitive to near rather than distant delays. In other words, the delay of immediate gratification (e.g., from today until tomorrow) tends to be much harder to do than delaying the same gratification the same amount at a more distant point in the future (e.g., from one year until one year and a day).

Consequently, an additional parameter (β) was introduced to represent an individual's *time-inconsistent* preference for immediate gratification—"how much she favors now over later" (O'Donoghue & Rabin, 2000). In the hyperbolic discount function, both parameters are used to calculate the present value of future utility ($= u_T \delta^T \beta$). If $\beta = 1$, preferences are time-consistent and the function is simply that of exponential discounting; however, if $\beta < 1$, the individual's intertemporal discount function will have a sharp, immediate kink, which indicates a preference for immediate gratification. Because her well-being today is much more important than her well-being tomorrow, impatience—consumption or otherwise—becomes inevitable.

3.1.2 Consumption Impatience

Consumption impatience is defined as "people's tendency to seek smaller-sooner rewards rather than to wait for larger but delayed rewards" (Li, 2008, p. 649). Consumption impatience is most likely to affect consumer behavior when products/activities have immediate costs and delayed benefits (e.g., insurance, gym memberships) (DellaVigna & Malmendier, 2006) or when products/activities have immediate benefits and delayed costs

(e.g., using credit cards, smoking, eating tasty but unhealthy food) (Ho, Lim, & Camerer, 2006). In both of these situations, individuals are forced to make a trade-off between their present and future. When individuals are present-oriented, they will over-indulge in the immediately beneficial activities and under-indulge in activities with immediate costs and delayed benefits. This can give rise to a number of self-control problems, such as undersaving, overeating, and overspending. In contrast, future-oriented individuals display the opposite pattern.

Though an individual's temporal orientation is believed to be relatively stable (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999), consumer researchers have shown it can be influenced by a number of situational influences. Li (2008) and Van den Bergh, Dewitte, and Warlop (2008) have shown that exposure to appetitive stimuli (e.g., sex cues and desserts) increases consumers' impatience, presumably via the activation of a general reward system focused on immediately available rewards. Compared to participants in the control conditions, participants in the appetitive conditions applied steeper discount functions to delayed monetary rewards, were more likely to choose smaller sooner rewards than delayed larger rewards, were more likely to choose vices over virtues, and were more likely to make unplanned purchases. Similarly, Kim and Zauberman (2012) demonstrate that in addition to making immediate rewards more attractive, sexual cues further contribute to general impatience by making temporal delays seem subjectively longer.

Even roles have been shown to change individuals' temporal orientation. In the Stanford Prison Experiment, participants went from being future-oriented college students to present-oriented prisoners without "any interest in the future after they were released" (Zimbardo & Boyd, 1999, p. 1273).

3.2 Hypothesis Development

In a similar vein, I propose the consumer role is also associated with a present orientation. North America's consumer society is built upon the search for instant gratification, as consumers are encouraged to pursue immediate desires rather than delayed gratification (Hayward, 2007; O'Shaughnessy & O'Shaughnessy, 2002). This widespread consumer impatience has garnered the attention of both the mainstream media and academia. In the

media, this phenomenon has given rise to the label “Instant America,” as American consumers are repeatedly criticized for their excessive concern with efficiency and unwillingness to wait for anything. Whether online (40% of online shoppers will leave a site that does not load in three seconds), in person (72% of Americans eat fast food at least once a week), or at an aggregate level (America has the lowest net domestic saving rate at 4.6% and one of the highest obesity rates), American consumers’ preference for immediate gratification is hard to ignore (OnlineGraduatePrograms.com, 2012)

Likewise, academics have noted strong consumer biases in favor of instant gratification and an unwillingness to consider future hardship and risk (Wallace, 1973). Consumerism is blamed for providing an alibi for self-indulgence, for creating an ‘infantilist’ ethic of consumption characterized by a childish ‘I-want-what-I-want-when-I-want-it’ attitude, and for proclaiming the value of immediate consumption, without any regard for future consumption (Barber, 2006; Hayward, 2007; O’Shaughnessy & O’Shaughnessy, 2002). The availability of credit combined with amazing technological advances (e.g., online shopping and overnight shipping) has resulted in an increasingly commercial and impersonal world that promotes self-indulgence and vilifies self-restraint (Akst, 2011). In fact, the association between consumerism and immediate gratification is so strong that simple exposure to American brands can trigger impatience. Specifically, Chen and colleagues (2005) demonstrate that priming bicultural individuals (Singaporean students) with logos of American brands (e.g., Nike, McDonalds, Coca-Cola) results in an increased desire for quicker service and product delivery, increased preference for options that offer earlier payoffs, and increased willingness to pay for immediate gratification.

In sum, because of this strong relationship between consumerism and immediate gratification, I propose that the consumer role is associated with a present orientation. Consequently, when individuals encounter a consumer role prime, their temporal orientation should become more present-oriented, ultimately resulting in consumer impatience.

H₁: A consumer role prime will increase present orientation.

3.3 Study 1

Study 1 was designed to set the foundation for a thorough examination of the consumer role's temporal orientation. The core objective of study 1 was to examine whether a consumer role prime activates a present orientation. To test the main effect of a consumer role prime on temporal orientation, I manipulate condition (consumer vs. control). Compared to individuals in the control condition, I predict that individuals in the consumer condition will have a steeper temporal discount rate and will display a stronger preference for smaller-sooner over larger but delayed rewards.

3.3.1 Design and Procedure

Study 1 was conducted with an online research pool. The manipulation and dependent variables were administered online. Seventy-seven adult participants (55% male; $M_{\text{age}} = 45.14$) were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. In the consumer condition, participants were exposed to a prime designed to activate the consumer role. Specifically, participants in the consumer condition were asked:

Please take two minutes and describe the typical consumer. What does he or she do? How does he or she behave? What does he or she think about?

This manipulation was adapted from the stereotype literature (e.g., Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1998); however, given that the prime does not focus on a specific association, I believe it is more aptly characterized as a role—as opposed to a stereotype—prime. Participants then completed two measures of temporal orientation. Participants in the control condition were not exposed to any prime, and simply completed the dependent measures.

3.3.2 Measures

3.3.2.1 Temporal Discount Rate

To measure participants' temporal discount rate, participants were asked to specify the amount of money they would need in one week and the amount they would need in one month to make them indifferent to receiving \$20 now (Ven den Bergh et al., 2008). These two points of information are sufficient to plot a discount function for each participant. Following Myerson, Green, and Warusawitharana (2001) and Ven den Bergh and

colleagues (2008), the area under the function will serve as my measure of temporal discounting. This measure is easy to calculate and to understand, and it allows me to compare groups without any assumptions regarding the form of the discount function (Myerson et al., 2001). The area can range from 0.0 (steepest discounting possible) to 1.0 (no discounting).

3.3.2.2 Choice of Immediate Versus Delayed Monetary Rewards

Present-oriented individuals should display a marked preference for sooner, rather than later, rewards, even if the rewards are significantly smaller. To measure this preference, participants were asked to make eight choices between a smaller-sooner and a larger-later monetary reward (table 1) (Li, 2008). To calculate participants' preference for sooner rather than later rewards, each choice of a sooner reward was scored as 1; choices of later rewards were scored as 0. These scores were then summed, with higher scores indicating a stronger preference for immediate gratification.

Table 1: Study 1 choice of immediate versus delayed monetary rewards.

<i>Choice</i>
\$10 tomorrow vs. \$12 in 25 days
\$67 tomorrow vs. \$85 in 70 days
\$34 tomorrow vs. \$35 in 43 days
\$48 tomorrow vs. \$55 in 45 days
\$40 tomorrow vs. \$70 in 20 days
\$16 tomorrow vs. \$30 in 35 days
\$30 tomorrow vs. \$35 in 20 days
\$15 tomorrow vs. \$35 in 10 days

3.3.3 Results

3.3.3.1 Temporal Discount Rate

To test my hypothesis, I ran a one-way ANOVA. After being exposed to a consumer role prime, participants discounted money more steeply, which was reflected by a smaller area under the discount function in the consumer condition ($M = .54$, $SD = .18$, $F(1, 75) = 5.03$, $p = .03$) than in the control condition ($M = .63$, $SD = .18$; figure 2).

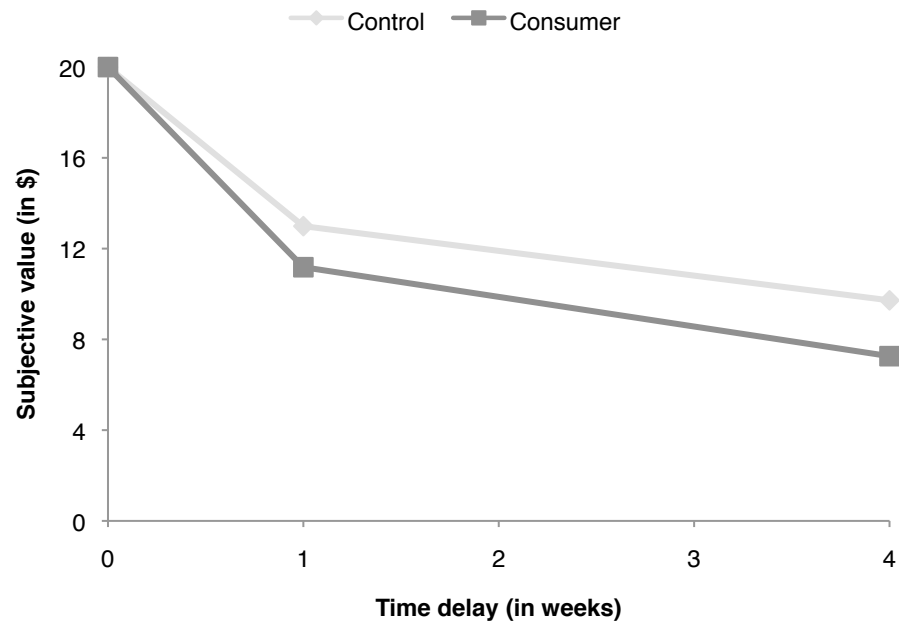


Figure 2: Study 1 delay discounting of a monetary reward as a function of condition.

3.3.3.2 Choice of Immediate Versus Delayed Monetary Rewards

A one-way ANOVA also revealed an effect of condition on choice of immediate versus delayed monetary rewards. After being exposed to a consumer role prime, participants were more likely to choose immediate monetary rewards ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 2.33$, $F(1, 76) = 3.11$, $p = .08$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 2.42$; figure 3).

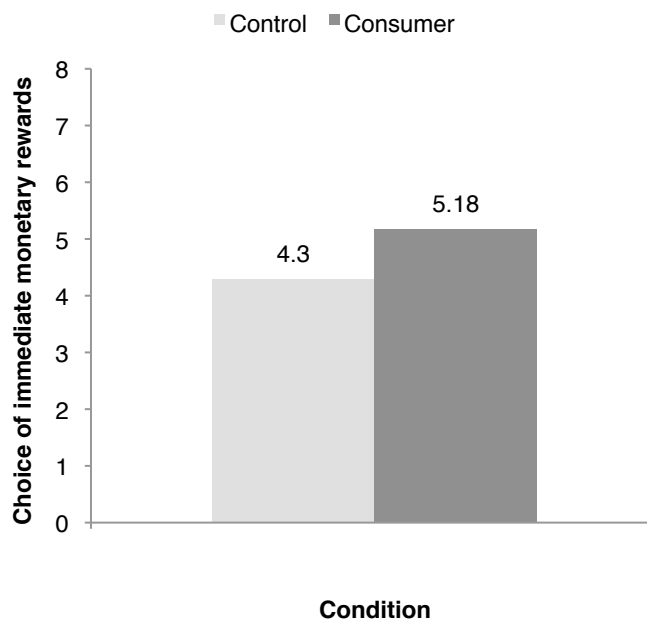


Figure 3: Study 1 preference for immediate monetary rewards as a function of condition.

3.3.4 Discussion

Study 1 establishes the relationship between a consumer role prime and a present orientation. As expected, after being exposed to a consumer role prime, participants reported a steeper discount rate and an increased preference for immediate as opposed to greater, but delayed, monetary rewards. Moving forward, special care is taken to ensure manipulations include a proper control condition.

Now that I have established the basic relationship between a consumer role prime and a present orientation, chapter 4 employs two studies to examine the underlying mechanism—that is, *why* is the consumer role present-oriented? In addition, chapter 4 examines whether

consumer role boundaries moderate the relationship between a consumer role prime and a present orientation.

Chapter 4

*“Real Americans are raised on instant gratification and the optimism that if they mess up, things will somehow all work out.”—Frankie Heck (character from *The Middle*)*

4 The Mechanisms(s) Behind Consumer Role Impatience

Impatience is ultimately a function of two distinct preferences—preference for immediate rewards and preference for delayed rewards (Kim & Zauberman, 2012). When the preference for the immediate reward is stronger, people are unwilling to wait for the delayed reward, and impatience ensues. Consequently, any stimulus that increases individuals’ valuations of an immediate reward or decreases their valuations of a delayed reward should be able to influence individuals’ degree of consumption impatience. In other words, if one of the preference changes, so does impatience. This point is important because it implies that consumer role impatience could be driven by two distinct mechanisms. A *perceived-value based account* of intertemporal preferences would argue consumer role impatience occurs because consumer role activation escalates desire for immediate rewards, making immediate rewards more valuable relative to delayed rewards (e.g., Van den Bergh et al., 2008). In contrast, a *perceived-time based account* would argue consumer role impatience occurs because consumer role activation increases the perceived distance to the delayed rewards, making delayed rewards less valuable relative to immediate rewards (e.g., Kim & Zauberman, 2012). To sum, consumer role impatience can be a function of not only increased desire for immediate rewards (perceived-value based account) but also a function of reduced desire for delayed rewards (perceived-time based account; figure 4). The question is, which of these paths is driving consumer role impatience?

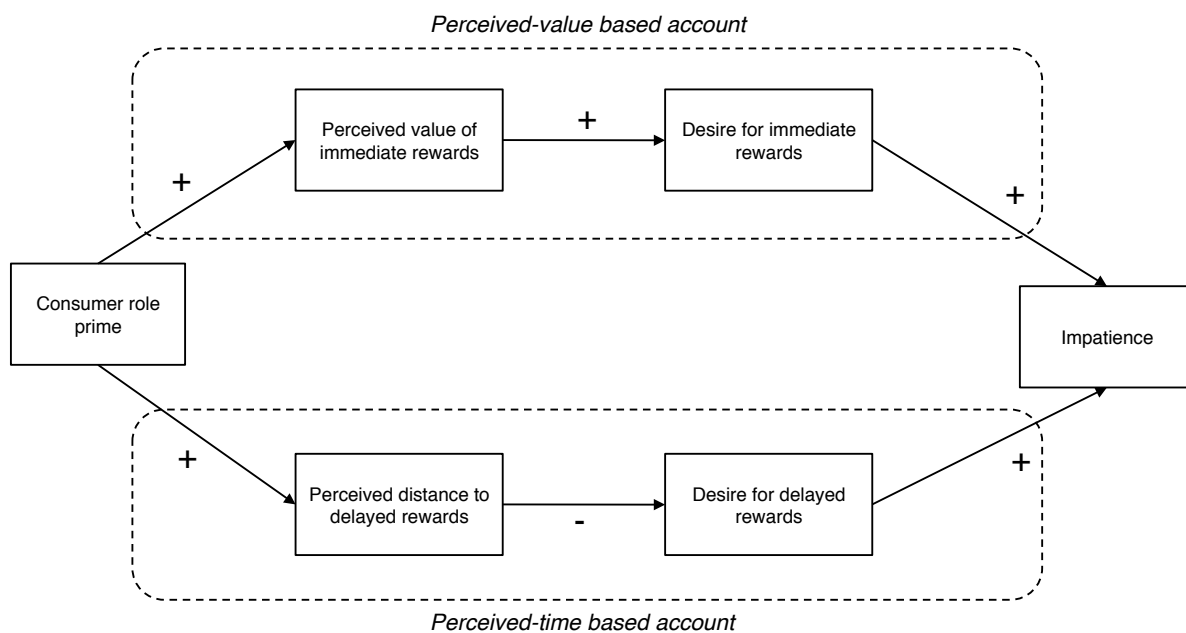


Figure 4: Two paths to consumer role impatience.

This chapter is organized as follows. I begin with a more thorough discussion of the two different mechanisms. Then, in two experiments, I test which of these best explains consumer role impatience. Specifically, study 2 examines whether consumer role activation enhances participants' perceived happiness upon receiving an immediate reward (supporting a perceived-value based account) or reduces participants' perceived happiness upon receiving a delayed reward (supporting a perceived-time based account; figure 4), and study 3 tests whether consumer role activation influences subjective time perception.

4.1 Hypotheses Development

4.1.1 Perceived-Value Based Account

Most of the research on situational impatience focuses on changing valuations of the immediate outcome—usually via the activation of a generalized reward system. According to the hot/cool-system analysis of delay of gratification, people have two modes of thinking and responding to stimuli (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999). The *cool system* is dispassionate and farsighted and consequently, able to weigh both the short-term and long-term consequences of behavior. In contrast, the *hot system* is simple, reactive, and fast—it wants what it wants

and it wants it now. Further and most important to this discussion, the hot system is triggered by proximal appetitive stimuli (i.e., pleasant and physiologically arousing stimuli) (Li 2008). Upon exposure to such ‘hot’ stimuli, people become more ‘hot’-headed, more indulgent, and less able to resist temptation (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999).

Until a few years ago, the effect of appetitive stimuli on the hot system was believed to be domain specific. To borrow an example, it was generally assumed that “a hungry person would only make short-sighted trade-offs between immediate and delayed food (and not between immediate and delayed money)” (Van den Bergh et al., 2008, p. 86; see also Li, 2008). However, recent work in consumer research has demonstrated that the consequences of activating the hot system are not good specific. Van den Bergh and colleagues (2008) find that exposure to sexy cues (e.g., images of women in bikinis or lingerie) leads to more impatience in intertemporal choice involving monetary rewards, and Li (2008) shows that exposure to the sight or smell of rich desserts makes individuals more present oriented, more likely to choose smaller-sooner rewards or vices, and more likely to make unplanned purchases.

Similarly, researchers have examined how differences in cognitive representations (i.e., construal level) between immediate and distant events result in different valuations of immediate rewards. For example, Malkoc and Zauberman (2006) demonstrate that concrete representations increase present-biased preferences, which manifest in high discount rates that decline sharply over time. Specifically, they show that framing a consumption episode as a delay scenario (e.g., your DVD is scheduled for same day delivery, but you can delay it to save money; study 3) anchors individuals on the present, resulting in concrete representations of the consumption episode and the ensuing present-biased preferences. In contrast, when the same consumption episode is framed as an expedite scenario (e.g., your DVD is scheduled for future delivery, but you can pay to have it delivered sooner), individuals anchor on the future, resulting in more abstract representations and attenuating present bias. Importantly, the differences in discount rates between the delay/concrete and expedite/abstract conditions are driven primarily by valuations early in the time horizon, suggesting that the different cognitive representations are affecting valuations of the immediate outcome and thus, are best explained by a perceived-value based account.

In the context of this research, a perceived-value based account implies that consumer role activation increases the perceived value of immediate rewards, making immediate rewards more desirable.

H₂: A consumer role prime will increase the perceived value of an immediate reward.

4.1.2 Perceived-Time Based Account

Recently, researchers have suggested that consumption impatience may be driven not by changes in the valuation of the outcome but by how long or short people perceive delays to be (Kim & Zauberan, 2009; Zauberan, Kim, Malkoc, & Bettman, 2009). For example, researchers have demonstrated the same set of intertemporal preferences can be accurately modeled using a constant discount rate and subjective time or using declining discount rates and objective time (Zauberan et al., 2009), and Kim and Zauberan (2012) find that sexual cues trigger impatience by influencing the perceived temporal distance to delayed rewards, ultimately making them seem farther away and less desirable.

The future can also appear nearer or farther depending on the perceived stability of one's identity (Bartels & Urminsky, 2011). When people believe their identity is highly stable, they are more willing to defer benefits to the future. When they feel their identity is highly unstable, they are more likely to indulge in the present. For example, after college seniors read a passage describing their upcoming graduation as an event that would significantly change one's identity (low stability), they exhibited more impatience and were more likely to choose smaller-sooner gift cards over larger-delayed gift cards. The effect was reversed for participants who were told graduation would not change their identity (high stability) (Bartels & Urminsky, 2011). Similar effects were found when perceived stability was manipulated via an accessibility task. For example, when participants were asked to generate 10 (vs. two) reasons why their identity would remain stable over the next 12 months, they were less willing to wait to buy a laptop that declines in price. Presumably, the difficulty of generating 10 reasons (compared to the ease of generating two reasons) caused participants to question the stability of their identity. Though Bartels and Urminsky (2011) do not explicitly place their work in either the perceived-value based or perceived-time

based accounts of impatience, they provide evidence that suggests the perceived stability of one's identity is affecting the perceived distance to the future rather than the perceived value of an immediate reward. Specifically, in their fourth study, the effect of manipulating perceived stability only significantly affected participants' one-year discount factor; the effect on their one-month discount factor was not significant. Thus, in line with a perceived time-based account, it appears instability resulted in impatience because it made the future seem farther away.

In the context of this research, a perceived-time based account implies that consumer role activation increases the perceived distance to a delayed reward, making delayed rewards less desirable. Because delayed rewards seem farther away and thus less attractive, individuals will be more impatient for immediate rewards (i.e., present-oriented).

H₃: A consumer role prime will decrease the perceived value of a delayed reward.

H₄: A consumer role prime will increase the perceived distance to a delayed reward.

4.1.3 Consumer Role Boundaries

Regardless of whether a consumer role prime increases desire for an immediate reward or decreases desire for a delayed reward, I expect the effect of a consumer role prime to be moderated by consumer role boundaries. Consumer role boundaries are strategies individuals use to manage when and how they respond to consumption cues (Whelan et al., 2011, 2013). Physical boundaries include rules and behaviors that manage when and where consumption cues are encountered. Monetary boundaries involve using budgets and other monetary constraints to manage when an individual considers the purchase and acquisition of consumer goods. When role boundaries are weaker, role activation should be mindless and automatic. In contrast, when role boundaries are stronger, role activation should be attenuated (Ashforth et al., 2000).

H₅: The effect of a consumer role prime on the perceived value of rewards and the perceived distance to rewards will be stronger (weaker) when consumer role boundaries are weaker (stronger).

These hypotheses are tested in two studies. Study 2 uses an already established design to isolate whether consumer role impatience is best explained by a perceived-value based account or a perceived-time based account (Kim & Zauberan, 2012, study 4). Study 3 tests whether participants exposed to a consumer role prime will judge the same future time duration to be longer than participants not exposed to a consumer role prime.

In sum, there are two distinct pathways in which situational stimuli can increase impatience: enhancing desire for immediate rewards via a generalized reward system or decreasing the perceived value of delayed rewards by making the future seem even farther away. The purpose of this chapter is to determine which of these is responsible for the temporal orientation of the consumer role.

4.2 Study 2

Study 2 was designed to examine whether consumer role impatience is due to the *immediate* rewards becoming *more* attractive (supporting a perceived value-based account; hypothesis 2) or due to the *delayed* rewards becoming *less* attractive (supporting a perceived-time based account; hypothesis 3). To do this, I measure participants' preferences for an immediate and a delayed reward and examine whether their perceived happiness from receiving either reward changes after being exposed to a consumer role prime (Kim & Zauberan, 2012, study 4). Further, I test whether the effect of the consumer role prime on the perceived value of immediate and delayed rewards is moderated by consumer role boundaries.

4.2.1 Design and Procedure

Study 2 was conducted with an online research pool. Adult participants ($n = 137$; 21% male; $M_{\text{age}} = 48.31$) were recruited to participate in a "series of small, unrelated studies." Prior to the manipulation, participants were asked to indicate their perceived happiness upon receiving \$100 today (immediate reward) and \$100 one month from now (delayed reward). Participants were then randomly assigned to one of two conditions (consumer vs. control). To manipulate condition, participants were asked to count "how many times the letter "e" appears" in a word cloud consisting of 13 words. In the consumer condition, 6 of the words were consumer-related (e.g., money, shopping, customer); 7 of the words were neutral (e.g., chair, lamp, clock). In the control condition, all 13 words were neutral (appendix B).

Following the manipulation, participants completed the same measures of perceived happiness that they completed prior to the manipulation. The study concluded with the consumer role boundary measure.

4.2.1.1 Perceived Happiness

To measure perceived happiness, participants were asked to imagine winning \$100 in a raffle and then to use a slider to indicate “how happy you would be if you received and spent the \$100 today (one month from now)” (Kim & Zauberman, 2012, study 4). The slider was anchored with *not happy at all* and *very happy*, and responses could range from 0 to 100, though participants were not aware of the numbers attached to their responses. Numeric values were not displayed to participants in order to minimize any potential carryover or anchoring effects.

4.2.1.2 Consumer Role Boundaries

Consumer role boundaries were measured with the 7-item consumer role boundaries scale (Whelan et al., 2011, 2013)(appendix C). All items used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) and were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate stronger boundaries. Physical boundaries was measured with four items (e.g., “I keep pictures of things I want to buy in places where I will frequently see them,” reverse-scored, $\alpha = .80$), and monetary boundaries was measured with three items (e.g., “I only let myself think about shopping when I know I can afford it,” $\alpha = .78$). The two types of boundaries were not significantly correlated ($r = -.16$).

4.2.2 Results

4.2.2.1 Perceived Happiness

A repeated measures ANOVA of perceived happiness ratings collected before the manipulation, with condition (consumer vs. control) as a between-subjects factor and the timing of rewards (immediate vs. delayed) as a within-subjects factor revealed no effect of the consumer role prime ($F(1, 132) = 1.25$) or the interaction of the prime and timing of rewards ($F(1, 132) = .20$), indicating participants did not differ in my baseline measure of perceived happiness. However, a significant main effect of the timing of rewards revealed

that perceived happiness was greater for immediate rewards ($F(1, 132) = 16.21, p < .001$, overall $M_{\text{immediate}} = 81.72$ vs. overall $M_{\text{delayed}} = 75.46$). Summary statistics are presented in table 2.

Table 2: Study 2 summary statistics.

Condition	Before manipulation				After manipulation			
	\$100 today		\$100 in one month		\$100 today		\$100 in one month	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	Control	78.97	26.36	73.42	27.48	79.41	25.66	72.57
Consumer	84.24	22.77	77.33	24.77	81.47	26.13	79.64	24.45

Next, I examined whether the consumer role manipulation affected perceived happiness from receiving immediate rewards, delayed rewards, or both. A three-factor repeated measures ANOVA with condition (consumer vs. control) as a between-subjects factor, timing of rewards (immediate vs. delayed) as a within-subjects factor, and timing of measurement (before vs. after the manipulation) as a within-subjects factor revealed a significant three-way interaction ($F(1, 131) = 5.21, p < .05$). To further breakdown this interaction, I conducted two additional repeated measure ANOVAs, one for immediate rewards and one for delayed rewards.

4.2.2.1.1 Perceived Happiness for Immediate Rewards

A repeated measures ANOVA with condition (consumer vs. control) as a between-subjects factor and timing of measurement (before vs. after the manipulation) as a within-subjects factor on perceived happiness for *immediate* rewards revealed no significant effects. The effect of condition ($F(1, 134) = .77$), timing of measurement ($F(1, 134) = .73$), and the interaction of condition and timing of measurement ($F(1, 134) = 1.01$) were all not significant. This indicates that the consumer role prime did not impact participants' perceived happiness from receiving immediate rewards (figure 5).

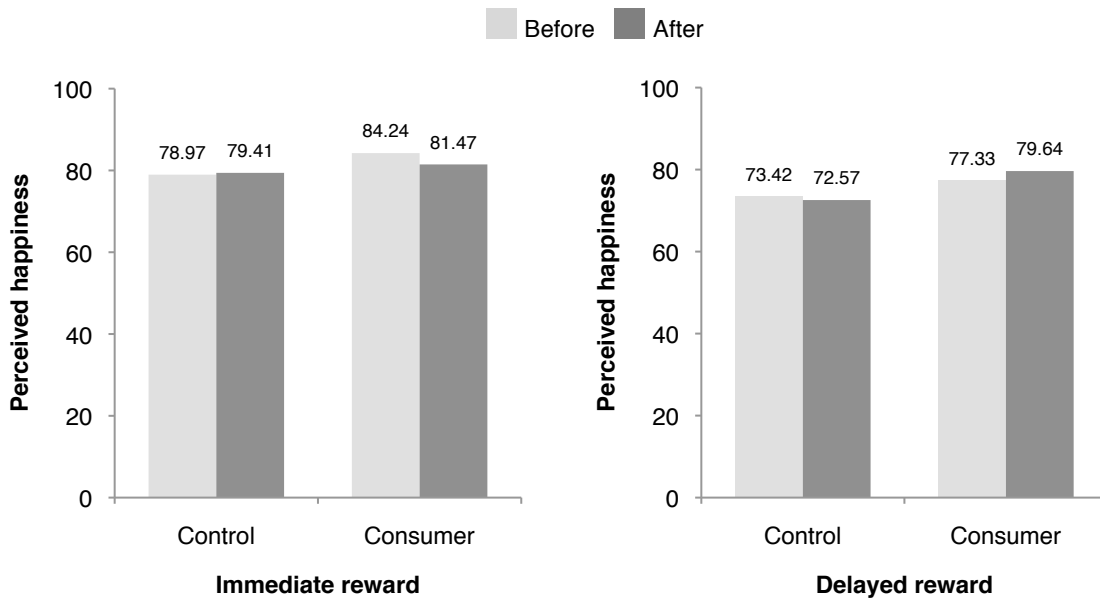


Figure 5: Study 2 perceived happiness before and after the consumer role prime.

To test whether consumer role boundaries moderated the effect of the consumer role prime, I used Hayes (2013) macro, model 2. This model estimated the main effects of the consumer role prime, physical boundaries, and monetary boundaries, as well as the interactive effects of the prime and physical boundaries and the prime and monetary boundaries on perceived happiness measured *after* the manipulation. Prime was dummy coded (0 = control; 1 = consumer). All continuous predictors were mean-centered, and I controlled for age, gender, and perceived happiness measured *before* the manipulation. The analysis revealed that consumer role boundaries did not moderate the effect of the consumer role prime on perceived happiness for immediate rewards measured after the manipulation (table 3).

Table 3: Study 2 model coefficients.

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>OUTCOMES[†]</i>					
	<i>Perceived happiness for immediate reward</i>			<i>Perceived happiness for delayed reward</i>		
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(127)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(124)</i>
Constant	19.76	8.55	2.31*	20.58	6.83	3.01**
Prime	-1.83	2.97	-.62	4.66	2.61	1.79 [†]
Physical boundaries	-.32	1.09	-.29	-1.16	.97	-1.20
Prime x physical boundaries	-.16	2.16	-.08	3.15	1.95	1.61
Monetary boundaries	-.03	1.07	-.02	-1.63	.94	-1.73 [†]
Prime x monetary boundaries	.97	2.26	.43	2.98	1.95	1.53
Perceived happiness <i>before</i> manipulation (covariate)	.80	.06	12.86***	.79	.05	15.50***
Age (covariate)	-.11	.12	-.86	-.13	.11	-1.22
Gender (covariate)	.01	3.78	.00	2.90	3.36	.87
	$R^2 = .59$			$R^2 = .68$		
	$F(8, 127) = 22.51***$			$F(8, 124) = 33.32***$		

[†]For each outcome, a separate model was analyzed.

[†] $p < .10$

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

4.2.2.1.2 Perceived Happiness for Delayed Rewards

A repeated measures ANOVA with condition (consumer vs. control) as a between-subjects factor and timing of measurement (before vs. after the manipulation) as a within-subjects factor on perceived happiness for *delayed* rewards also revealed no significant effects. The effect of condition ($F(1, 131) = 1.62$), timing of measurement ($F(1, 131) = .23$), and the interaction of condition and timing of measurement ($F(1, 131) = 1.38$) were all not significant. This indicates that the consumer role prime also did not impact participants' perceived happiness from receiving delayed rewards (figure 5).

As with perceived happiness for immediate rewards, Hayes (2013) macro, model 2, revealed that consumer role boundaries did not moderate the effect of the consumer role prime on perceived happiness for delayed rewards measured after the manipulation (table 3).

4.2.3 Discussion

The results of study 2 do not support hypothesis 2, 3, or 4. Participants' perceived happiness upon receiving either an immediate or delayed reward did not differ as function of the consumer role prime. Further, the interactive effects of the consumer role prime and the two types of consumer role boundaries were also not significant. In the next study, I continue my

exploration of the underlying mechanism but with a slightly different approach. Instead of examining perceived happiness upon receiving immediate and delayed rewards, I look at whether a consumer role prime influences perceptions of future time durations.

4.3 Study 3

Study 3 was designed to test the effect of a consumer role prime on perceptions of future time durations and the implications of this effect for intertemporal preferences. Compared to individuals in the control condition, I predict that individuals in the consumer condition will perceive future time durations to be longer and that this will subsequently result in a steeper discount rate and an increased preference for consumer goods with more immediate versus delayed benefits (figure 6). Further, I expect this effect to be qualified by a significant interaction, such that the effect of the consumer role prime will be stronger when consumer role boundaries are weaker.

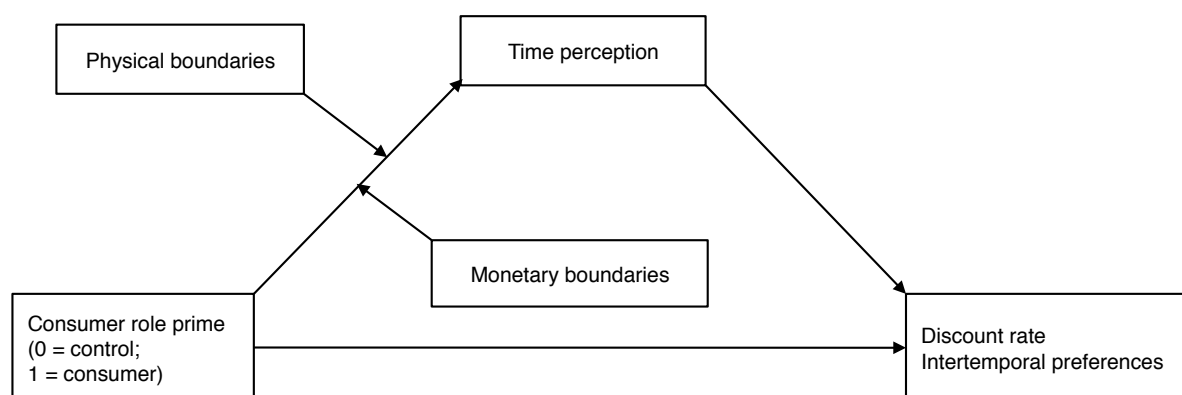


Figure 6: Study 3 conceptual model.

4.3.1 Design and Procedure

Study 3 was conducted with an online research pool. Adult participants ($n = 221$; 23% male; $M_{age} = 48.09$) were recruited to participate in a “series of small, unrelated studies.”

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (consumer vs. control), which was manipulated with the world cloud manipulation used in study 2. Immediately following the word cloud task, participants completed a measure of time perception, two measures of intertemporal preferences, a small filler task consisting of counting the number of yellow blocks in an image, and lastly, the consumer role boundaries measure.

4.3.2 Measures

4.3.2.1 Time Perception

To measure time perception, participants were asked to imagine a day 3 months (1 year) from now and then to use a slider to indicate “how long you consider the duration between today and a day 3 months (1 year) later” (Zauberman et al., 2009). This measure has been used in a number of articles examining subjective time perception and is believed to be sensitive enough to reveal diminishing sensitivity to time (Kim, 2010; Kim & Zauberman, 2012; Zauberman et al., 2009). The slider was anchored with *very short* and *very long*, and responses could range from 0 to 100, though participants were not aware of the numbers attached to their responses. As with my earlier measure of perceived happiness, numeric values were not displayed to participants in order to minimize any potential carryover or anchoring effects.

4.3.2.2 Temporal Discount Rate

Temporal discount rate was measured with a modified version of the measure used in study 1. Specifically, participants were asked to imagine they had won a \$50 prize and that they had the option to delay the reward for 3 months (1 year). They were then asked to report the dollar amount they would require if they “had to wait 3 months (1 year) to receive it.”

4.3.2.3 Relative Preference for Products with Immediate versus Delayed Benefits

Present-oriented individuals should display a preference for products with more immediate versus more delayed benefits. To measure this, participants were asked to evaluate three different pairs of products. They were told that, within each pair, both items cost the same amount. Since products were presented as a pair, participants were “placed in a choice mindset when evaluating the two products” (White, Argo, & Sengupta, 2012, p. 708). Each pair consisted of a product with more immediate benefits and a similar product with relatively more delayed benefits (a faster laptop vs. a laptop with a longer warranty; a bouquet of daffodils vs. potted daffodils that have yet to bloom; and a piece of chocolate cake vs. a bowl of fruit salad). Each option was evaluated on three 9-point scales (*unfavorable* vs. *favorable*; *dislike* vs. *like*; *bad* vs. *good*) (White et al., 2012), and I created

an average score for present-oriented products ($\alpha = .86$) and future-oriented products ($\alpha = .85$). Relative preference for present-oriented products was calculated by subtracting the overall evaluation of the future-oriented products from the overall evaluation of the present-oriented products. Thus, present orientation was indicated by a higher score on this measure of relative preferences.

4.3.2.4 Consumer Role Boundaries

Consumer role boundaries were measured with the 7-item scale consumer role boundaries scale (Whelan et al., 2011, 2013) (appendix C). All items used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) and were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate stronger boundaries. Physical boundaries was measured with four items ($\alpha = .81$), and monetary boundaries was measured with three items ($\alpha = .77$). The two types of boundaries were not significantly correlated ($r = -.05$).

4.3.3 Results

4.3.3.1 Time Perception

To test for the main effect of condition (consumer vs. control) on perception of future time durations, I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with future time duration (3 months vs. 12 months) as a within-subjects factor and the consumer role prime manipulation as a between-subjects factor. The effect of the consumer role prime was not significant ($F(1, 208) = .19$). Summary statistics are presented in table 4.

Table 4: Study 3 summary statistics

<i>Outcome</i>	<i>Control</i>		<i>Consumer</i>	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Duration of 3 months	43.41	23.99	45.36	24.28
Duration of 12 months	67.27	28.78	68.18	26.11
Discount rate	.88	3.21	.68	2.44
Preference for product with immediate benefits	7.68	1.31	7.41	1.32
Preference for products with delayed preferences	7.69	1.18	7.73	1.18
Relative preference (immediate minus delayed)	-.01	1.26	-.31	1.49

To test hypothesis 4 and the full model depicted in figure 6 (i.e., whether future time perception mediates the effect of a consumer role prime on intertemporal preferences), I had to create a single measure of time perception. To do this, I divided each measure of time

perception by the number of months judged and then averaged these two scores to compute a single measure of average perception per month (Kim & Zauberman, 2012). I then conducted a moderated mediation analysis using the macro developed by Hayes (2013, model 9). This model estimated the effect of the consumer role prime on temporal discount rate and relative preference for products with immediate benefits (a separate model was analyzed for each outcome) directly as well as indirectly through time perception, with the indirect effect through time perception moderated by physical boundaries and monetary boundaries. Prime was dummy coded (0 = control; 1 = consumer). All continuous predictors were mean-centered, and I controlled for age and gender. Unfortunately, none of the predictors significantly predicted time perception (table 5).

Table 5: Study 3 model coefficients

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>MEDIATOR</i>			<i>OUTCOMES[†]</i>					
	<i>Time perception</i>			<i>Temporal discount rate</i>			<i>Relative preference for products with immediate benefits</i>		
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(207)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(208)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(208)</i>
Constant	10.41	.35	29.75***	.89	.97	.91	.20	.46	.44
Prime	.51	.70	.73	-.19	.40	-.48	-.26	.19	-1.37
Time perception (mediator)	—	—	—	.01	.04	.19	.04	.02	2.04*
Physical boundaries	-.38	.25	-1.51	—	—	—	—	—	—
Prime x physical boundaries	.29	.50	.59	—	—	—	—	—	—
Monetary boundaries	.25	.27	.91	—	—	—	—	—	—
Prime x monetary boundaries	.95	.55	1.73`	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age (covariate)	—	—	—	.00	.02	-.29	-.01	.01	-1.47
Gender (covariate)	—	—	—	.06	.48	.12	-.27	.23	-1.20
	$R^2 = .03$			$R^2 = .00$			$R^2 = .04$		
	$F(5, 207) = 1.37$			$F(4, 208) = .10$			$F(4, 208) = 2.34$		

[†]For each outcome, a separate model was analyzed.

` $p < .10$

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

4.3.3.2 Temporal Discount Rate

Neither the direct effect of the consumer role prime nor the indirect effect of the prime via time perception significantly predicted temporal discount rate (all confidence intervals excluded 0; table 6).

Table 6: Study 3 conditional indirect effect of consumer role prime at values of the moderators.

<i>Values of the moderators</i>		<i>Via time perception</i>					
		<i>Temporal discount rate</i>			<i>Relative preference for products with immediate benefits</i>		
		<i>Physical</i>	<i>Monetary</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	<i>Effect</i>
-1 SD	-1 SD	-.00	-.19	.04	-.03	-.16	.05
-1 SD	M	.00	-.05	.07	.01	-.05	.11
-1 SD	+1 SD	.01	-.05	.18	.05	-.04	.20
M	-1 SD	-.01	-.14	.03	-.02	-.13	.04
M	M	.00	-.02	.08	.02	-.02	.11
M	+1 SD	.01	-.06	.16	.06	-.01	.21
+1 SD	-1 SD	.00	-.16	.05	-.01	-.14	.08
+1 SD	M	.01	-.03	.13	.03	-.04	.15
+1 SD	+1 SD	.02	-.06	.19	.07	-.01	.25

Bold indicates significant conditional indirect effect (confidence interval excludes 0).

4.3.3.3 Relative Preference for Products with Immediate versus Delayed Benefits

Neither the direct effect of the consumer role prime nor the indirect effect of the prime via time perception significantly predicted relative preference for products with immediate benefits (all confidence intervals excluded 0; table 6). However, time duration did significantly predict relative preferences ($\beta = .04$, $t(208) = 2.04$, $p < .05$). As time perception increased (i.e., as the future seemed farther away), preferences for products with immediate benefits also increased.

4.3.4 Discussion

The results of study 3 do not support my hypotheses. Neither the direct effect of the consumer role prime nor the interactive effects of the consumer role prime and the two types of consumer role boundaries significantly predicted perceptions of future time durations. The only significant relationship in this study was the effect of time perception on preference for products with immediate versus delayed benefits. When participants judged the future as being farther away, they preferred products with more immediate, as opposed to delayed, benefits.

My failure to detect significant results in both studies could be due to a number of design limitations. First, my measures of perceptions of perceived happiness (study 2) and future time duration (study 3) may have encountered ceiling effects. Given the fixed endpoints of

the scale, participants could only increase their perceived time duration or perceived happiness by a limited amount. Ideally, I would have employed a physically unbounded line scale (i.e., an infinite scale without anchors or endpoints) (Kim, 2010; Kim & Zauberan, 2009). Unfortunately, an unbounded line scale was not possible due to limitations with the survey software.

Second, both studies used the same consumer role prime. Though I was hoping to demonstrate that even the most minimal manipulation of the independent variable could result in some variance in consumer role activation (Prentice & Miller, 1992), it is possible that the word cloud manipulation was simply not strong enough to activate the consumer role. For a prime to spread through a network of associations, it requires a minimum threshold of activation, which then “spreads out along the paths of the network in a decreasing gradient” (i.e., the activation is attenuated as it spreads outward) (Collins & Loftus, 1975, p. 411). Thus, in the subsequent studies, I employ stronger manipulations, and I also test the effects of the prime at multiple stages in hopes of detecting consumer role activation.

In addition, until now, I have been focused solely on the consumer role’s temporal orientation. Given this singular focus, I cannot be certain that role activation occurred (as opposed to simply activating a present orientation). Thus, in chapter 5, I go beyond the present orientation of the consumer role and examine the simultaneous activation of multiple associations of the consumer role.

Chapter 5

5 The Consumer Role Is a Network of Associations

Though the previous two chapters were focused on establishing the temporal orientation of the consumer role, present orientation is only one of many potential associations of the consumer role. In this chapter, I broaden my perspective and examine the consumer role as a network of associations. Specifically, I examine whether a consumer role prime can simultaneously activate multiple traits associated with being a consumer and whether these effects are mediated by thoughts directly related to the prime. By investigating multiple trait associations as well as measuring activation at different stages (i.e., locations within the network), I hope to build on the limitations of the previous studies and provide a more thorough understanding of consumer role activation.

5.1 Hypotheses Development

If roles are conceptualized as a network of associations, role activation should be conceptualized as the activation of a network of associations. Consequently, inferring consumer role activation requires the identification of multiple associations, not just present orientation. The consumer research literature has already established the relationship between various consumer cues (i.e., external stimuli associated with the purchase and acquisition of consumer goods) and two additional traits. Specifically, images of desirable consumer goods and the term “consumer” can trigger materialism (Bauer et al., 2012), and money activates expectations of and adherence to exchange-oriented norms (i.e., tit-for-tat norms of reciprocity) (Heyman & Ariely, 2004). In addition, given that materialism is considered *the* consumer value (e.g., materialism is essential to children’s socialization into the consumer role) (John, 1999; Mayer & Belk, 1982) and that most, if not all, consumer transactions are exchange-oriented, it seems intuitive that materialism and exchange orientation would be part of the network of associations that constitute the consumer role.

Thus, I hypothesize that, in addition to present orientation, consumer role activation should be marked by an increase in materialism and exchange orientation. Providing further support for a role theoretic approach, I also expect the relationship between a consumer role prime and materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation to be moderated by consumer role boundaries.

H₆: A consumer role prime will increase materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation.

H₇: These effects will be (a) greater when consumer role boundaries are weaker and (b) lesser when consumer role boundaries are stronger.

Furthermore, if the consumer role is a network of associations, I should also be able to test the process by which activation occurs. According to most spreading activation models of priming effects, “conceptual knowledge is organized into a semantic network that features connections between semantically or associatively linked concepts” (Arndt, Greenberg, & Cook, 2002, p. 308). When a concept within a network is activated, the activation and increased accessibility spreads to other associated concepts. Importantly, activation spreads outward along the paths of the network (Collins & Loftus, 1975), implying that the activation of more distal concepts should be mediated by the activation of more proximal concepts. Thus, to ensure that I detect some degree of consumer role activation and avoid the shortcomings of the previous chapter, I measure thoughts directly related to the consumer role prime (i.e., a more proximal concept) and use a stronger (i.e., more involved) manipulation. Even if the consumer role prime is not strong enough to reach the more distal trait associations, it should, at the very minimum, trigger thoughts directly related to the prime.

To illustrate, there is a large body of research demonstrating that, when people are reminded of their own mortality, they engage in responses designed to defend their worldview (for reviews, see Greenberg, Solomon, & Pyszczynski, 1997; Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2004). For example, Americans primed with reminders of death reported increased support for then President George W. Bush and his counterterrorism policies (Landau et al., 2004); and materialistic individuals exposed to mortality primes report

stronger brand connections and higher financial expectations for their future, both in terms of overall wealth and the amount of money they would spend on luxury items (Kasser & Sheldon, 2000; Rindfleisch, Burroughs, & Wong, 2009). A spreading activation model of these effects demonstrates that they are mediated by death-related thoughts. In other words, the mortality prime first activates thoughts directly associated with the prime, which then spread to activate associated concepts within an individual's worldview (Arndt et al., 2002). In a similar vein, I posit that the effects of a consumer role prime should be mediated by thoughts directly associated with the prime (figure 7).

H₈: The moderating effect of consumer role boundaries on the relationship between the consumer role prime and materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation will be mediated by prime-related thoughts.

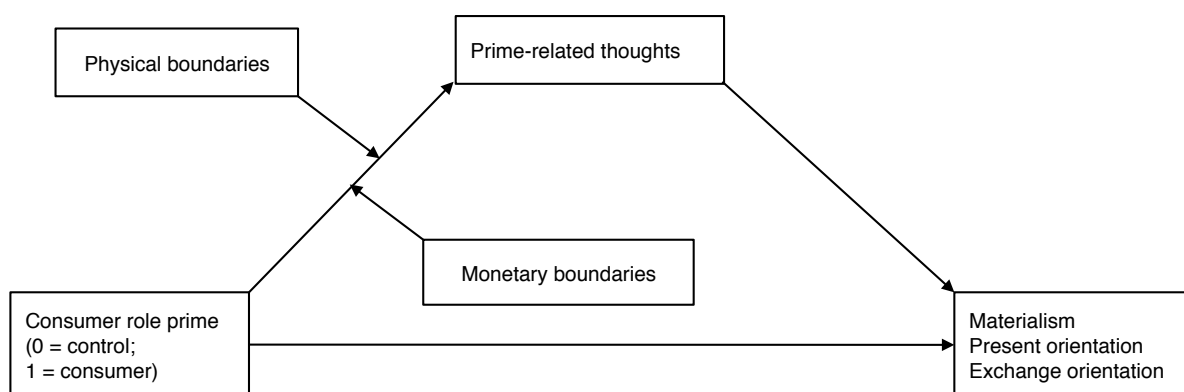


Figure 7: Study 4 conceptual model.

In sum, the goal of this chapter is to explore whether a consumer role prime will activate a network of associations and whether this activation will spread outward through the network, beginning with more proximal associations (prime-related thoughts) and extending to more distal associations (materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation).

5.2 Study 4

5.2.1 Design and Procedure

American adults ($n = 197$) were recruited via *Qualtrics* to participate in an online study (51% male, $M_{\text{age}} = 43$). They were told they would first complete a number of small pre-

tests. In order, the pre-tests included the consumer role boundaries scale, a short filler task involving counting the number of different colored blocks in a photo, my experimental manipulation, and lastly, my dependent measures. Participants were randomly assigned to view either 12 consumer-related images (consumer condition) or 12 images categorized as neutral in valence and arousal in the International Affective Picture System (e.g., images of elastic bands, fabric, architecture; control condition) (Lang, Bradley, & Cuthbert, 2008). The consumer-related images included images of credit cards, people enjoying shopping, people overwhelmed by stuff, and piles of garbage/junk. Each image was displayed for five seconds. All participants were instructed to view the images carefully, as they would be asked questions about the images at the end of the study. After the manipulation, participants completed measures of prime-related thoughts, materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation, as well as affect.

5.2.2 Measures

5.2.2.1 Prime-Related Thoughts

To measure my hypothesized mediator, prime-related thoughts, I created a series of items to measure thoughts directly related to the consumer role prime (e.g., “I think seeing those pictures made me want something new,” $\alpha = .90$, 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*; appendix D)

5.2.2.2 Materialism

Materialism was measured with Richins’ (2004) short-form 9-item scale (e.g., “I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes,” $\alpha = .88$, appendix E).

5.2.2.3 Present Orientation

Present orientation was assessed with seven items that capture high concern for immediate consequences (e.g., “My behavior is only influenced by the immediate (i.e., a matter of days or weeks) outcomes of my actions,” $\alpha = .92$, appendix F) (Joireman, Shaffer, Balliet, & Strathman, 2012; Strathman et al., 1994).

5.2.2.4 Exchange Orientation

Exchange orientation was measured with Murstein, Wadlin, and Bond's (1987) scale (e.g., "If I praise a friend for his or her accomplishments, I expect him or her to praise me for mine as well," $\alpha = .90$, appendix G).

5.2.2.5 Consumer Role Boundaries

Consumer role boundaries were measured with the 7-item consumer role boundaries scale (Whelan et al., 2011, 2013). All items used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) and were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate stronger boundaries. Physical boundaries (4 items; $\alpha = .76$) and monetary boundaries (3 items; $\alpha = .80$) were not significantly correlated ($r = -.04$).

5.2.3 Alternative Explanation

To rule out a mood explanation, I collected a five-item measure of affect immediately following the dependent measures (e.g., "I feel calm," $\alpha = .89$, 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*, appendix H). I regressed affect on the consumer role prime (0 = control; 1 = consumer), physical boundaries, monetary boundaries, and the interaction between the consumer role prime and physical boundaries and the consumer role prime and monetary boundaries. Only the main effect of physical boundaries was significant ($\beta = -.19$, $t(190) = -2.16$, $p < .05$; all other p 's $> .60$). Means, standard deviations, and correlations among all model variables are displayed in table 7.

Table 7: Study 4 means, standard deviations, and correlations between model variables

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Physical boundaries	4.62	1.36	—	-.04	-.38**	-.33**	-.23**	-.22**
2. Monetary boundaries	4.83	1.39		—	.17*	.11	.10	.11
3. Prime-related thoughts	3.33	1.23			—	.56**	.44**	.47**
4. Materialism	3.80	1.18				—	.40**	.46**
5. Present orientation	3.30	1.26					—	.51**
6. Exchange orientation	3.42	1.45						—

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

5.2.4 Results

To test the model depicted in figure 7 (a separate model was analyzed for each trait), I conducted a moderated mediation analysis using the macro developed by Hayes (2013, model 9). This model estimated the effect of the consumer role prime on the selected trait (materialism, present orientation, or exchange orientation) directly⁴ as well as indirectly through prime-related thoughts, with the indirect effect through prime-related thoughts moderated by physical boundaries and monetary boundaries. Consumer role prime was dummy coded (0 = control; 1 = consumer). Physical boundaries, monetary boundaries, and prime-related thoughts were mean-centered, and I controlled for age. All three models displayed a similar pattern of results and are summarized in table 8.

⁴ The main effects of the consumer role prime on materialism ($F(1, 196) = 1.04, p > .30$) and present orientation ($F(1, 196) = 2.04, p > .10$) were not significant. The main effect of the consumer role prime on exchange orientation approached significance ($F(1, 196) = 3.12, p = .08$). Participants in the consumer condition reported a higher exchange orientation ($M = 3.60$) than those in the control condition ($M = 3.24$).

Table 8: Study 4 model coefficients.

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>MEDIATOR</i>			<i>OUTCOMES[†]</i>								
	<i>Prime-related thoughts</i>			<i>Materialism</i>			<i>Present orientation</i>			<i>Exchange orientation</i>		
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(188)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(191)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(191)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(191)</i>
Constant	.60	.25	2.46*	4.40	.26	20.32***	3.69	.26	14.43***	3.96	.29	13.75***
Consumer role prime	.39	.16	2.49*	-.12	.14	-.86	.00	.17	.02	.06	.19	.30
Prime-related thoughts (mediator)	—	—	—	.52	.06	8.90***	.42	.07	6.05***	.51	.08	6.56***
Physical boundaries	-.29	.06	-4.87***	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Consumer role prime x physical boundaries	-.18	.12	-1.51	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Monetary boundaries	.16	.06	2.58*	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Consumer role prime x monetary boundaries	-.19	.11	-1.66`	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Age (covariate)	-.02	.01	-2.83**	-.01	.01	-2.84**	-.01	.01	-1.59	-.01	.01	-1.91
	$R^2 = .48$			$R^2 = .35$			$R^2 = .20$			$R^2 = .23$		
	$F(6, 188) = 9.57***$			$F(3, 191) = 33.81***$			$F(3, 191) = 15.40***$			$F(3, 191) = 18.79***$		

[†]For each outcome, a separate model was analyzed.

` $p < .10$.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

5.2.4.1 Prime-Related Thoughts

The consumer role prime ($\beta = .39$, $t(190) = 2.49$, $p < .05$), physical boundaries ($\beta = -.29$, $t(190) = -4.87$, $p < .001$), monetary boundaries ($\beta = .16$, $t(190) = 2.58$, $p < .05$), and age ($\beta = -.02$, $t(190) = -2.83$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted prime-related thoughts. The interactions between the consumer role prime and physical boundaries ($\beta = -.18$, $t(190) = -1.51$, $p = .13$) and the consumer role prime and monetary boundaries ($\beta = -.19$, $t(190) = -1.66$, $p = .09$) on prime-related thoughts approached significance.

5.2.4.2 Present Orientation, Materialism, and Exchange Orientation

More importantly, the indirect effect of the consumer role prime via prime-related thoughts on materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation was significantly moderated by consumer role boundaries. When physical boundaries and monetary boundaries were both weaker (1 SD below the mean), average (at the mean), or one strategy was weaker and the other was average, the conditional indirect effect of the consumer role prime on materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation was significantly mediated by prime-related thoughts (all confidence intervals excluded 0; table 9). When either physical boundaries or monetary boundaries were stronger (1 SD above the mean), the conditional indirect effect of the consumer role prime on materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation was not significant (all confidence intervals included 0; table 9).

Table 9: Study 4 conditional indirect effect of consumer role prime at values of the moderators.

<i>Values of the moderators</i>		<i>Via prime-related thoughts</i>								
		<i>Materialism</i>			<i>Present orientation</i>			<i>Exchange orientation</i>		
<i>Physical</i>	<i>Monetary</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
-1 SD	-1 SD	.47	.18	.82	.38	.12	.75	.46	.16	.89
-1 SD	M	.33	.08	.64	.28	.06	.57	.33	.08	.70
-1 SD	+1 SD	.20	-.10	.56	.16	-.06	.48	.19	-.12	.57
M	-1 SD	.34	.12	.58	.28	.08	.55	.34	.10	.67
M	M	.09	.04	.39	.17	.04	.35	.20	.06	.41
M	+1 SD	.07	-.17	.31	.06	-.12	.27	.97	-.17	.32
+1 SD	-1 SD	.22	-.04	.53	.17	-.03	.43	.21	-.03	.57
+1 SD	M	.08	0.16	.29	.06	-.13	.23	.08	-.13	.32
+1 SD	+1 SD	-.06	-.33	.21	-.05	-.33	.16	-.06	-.36	.19

Bold indicates significant conditional indirect effect (confidence interval excludes 0).

5.2.5 Discussion

The results of this study support my conceptualization of the consumer role as a network of associations by demonstrating (1) a consumer role prime can simultaneously activate multiple traits associated with being a consumer (hypothesis 6); (2) the activation of these associations is mediated by associations more proximal to the prime itself (hypothesis 7); and (3) the effect of the consumer role prime is moderated by individual differences in consumer role boundaries (hypothesis 8). For participants with weaker or average consumer role boundaries, the consumer role prime activated thoughts directly associated with the prime, which then subsequently increased materialism, present orientation, and exchange orientation. In contrast, when either physical boundaries or monetary boundaries were stronger, the effect of the consumer role prime was not significant.

In the next chapter, I return to the initial motivation behind this research and examine the implications of consumer role activation and individual differences in consumer role boundaries on outcomes not traditionally associated with being a consumer. As mentioned in chapter 1, the increasing “consumerization” of non-consumer domains, such as education, healthcare, and politics, has become a topic of much interest and debate (e.g., Aberbach & Christensen, 2005; Delucchi & Korgen, 2002; Folkes, 2002; Gitlin, 1978; Schudson, 2006; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010; Westbrook, 1983). For example, consulting firms encourage health care providers to treat their patients like consumers (Fam & Purdy, 2009), universities are struggling with a more consumer-oriented approach to education (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002; Zirkel, 1994), and voters increasingly see themselves as consumers first and citizens second (Lebowitz, 2011). Nevertheless, there is little empirical evidence to suggest if or why the increasing prominence of the consumer role in these non-consumer domains matters. Thus, in order to weigh in on this discussion, chapter 6 provides the first demonstration of how the consumer role can affect non-consumer behaviors.

Chapter 6

“Consumer politics is a whole different way of doing—and seeing—politics. In this view, winning [not governing] is the primary goal. It’s the ultimate transaction. It is also the litmus test of what is the “right” thing to do because winning signals that a party has given the public what it wants—and that is the ultimate aim of consumer politics.”—Delacourt and Lenihan (2011, p. 38)

“In my view the ideal society would be one in which each citizen developed a real split personality, acting selfishly in the market place and altruistically in the ballot box”—Meade (1973, p. 52)

6 The Consumer Role and Political Preferences

With the rise of the modern economy after the Second World War, many industrial democracies began to view politics and citizenship “through the lens of consumerism” (Delacourt & Lenihan, 2011, p. 36). Presumably, the rise in individuals’ purchasing power elevated their roles as consumers to being as or more important than their roles as citizens. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the media, where the term *consumer* is synonymous with *citizen* (Bauer et al., 2012). This movement has resulted in wide-ranging discussion about the differences between thinking of oneself as a consumer versus citizen (e.g., Aberbach & Christensen, 2005; Gitlin, 1978; Schudson, 2006; Westbrook, 1983), but there is little evidence to suggest if or why the distinction matters.

Theoretically, the consumer role and the citizen role are fundamentally opposed to one another: consumerism is rooted in individual self-interest whereas citizenship is rooted in collective responsibility to social and ecological commons (Johnston, 2008). Thus, differences in their relative accessibility should substantially alter behavior. In the studies reported here, I extend this logic to test a novel prediction about the consequences of consumer role activation in the highly consequential arena of American politics. Specifically, in two experiments, I test whether priming participants to think of themselves as consumers (vs. citizens) promotes political conservatism.

6.1 Hypotheses Development

Because consumerism and political conservatism are both strongly associated with self-focus (i.e., paying more attention to one's own outcomes than the outcomes of others; Bauer et al., 2012; Belk, 1985; Borgmann, 2000; Burroughs & Rindfleisch, 2002; Johnston, 2008; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Stankov, 2009), I predict that consumer role activation should lead to a greater likelihood to vote for conservative candidates and that this effect should be mediated by self-focus (figure 8). Unfortunately, self-focus is notoriously difficult to measure (Eichstaedt & Silvia, 2003). It cannot be measured with conventional self-report methods, because asking participants how self-focused they are promotes thinking about the self (Silvia & Gendolla, 2001). In fact, self-report measures of self-focus have been used to *manipulate* self-focus (Brown, 1988; Osberg, 1985). Given these difficulties, I chose to measure self-focus with exchange orientation. I chose exchange orientation for a number of reasons. First and foremost, I believe it is an adequate proxy for self-focus, as “exchange-oriented individuals are relatively more self-oriented in that they are primarily concerned with monitoring relationship exchanges to make sure they are getting their ‘fair share’” (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001, p. 175; see also Clark & Mills, 2012). Second, the relationship between exchange orientation and the consumer role was established in the previous chapter. Lastly, though there is no direct support linking exchange orientation to political conservatism, research suggests that conservatives tend to be more exchange-oriented than liberals, preferring equity-based policies (i.e., rewards are distributed relative to inputs) over equality-based policies (i.e., rewards are distributed equally, regardless of inputs) (Graham, Iyer, & Meindl, 2013; Mitchell, Tetlock, Mellers, & Ordóñez, 1993; Rohrbaugh, McClelland, & Quinn, 1980). More formally,

- H₇: A consumer role prime will increase political conservatism compared to a citizen role prime.
- H₈: This effect will be (a) stronger when consumer role boundaries are weaker and (b) weaker when consumer role boundaries are stronger.

H₉: The moderating effect of consumer role boundaries on the relationship between a consumer role prime and political conservatism will be mediated by exchange orientation.

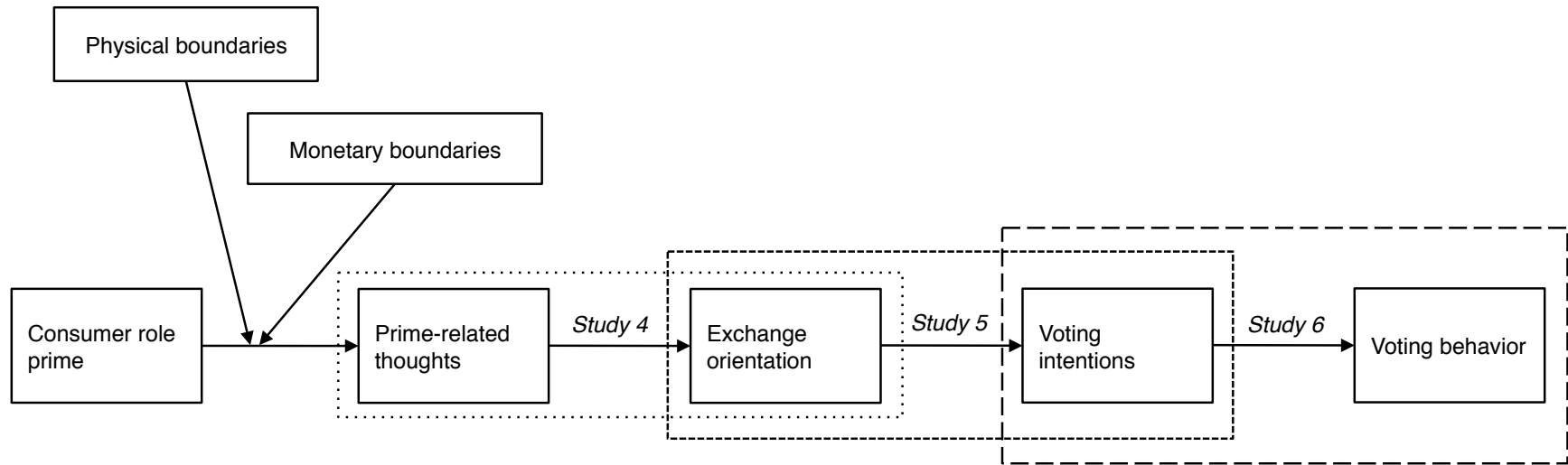


Figure 8: A consumer role prime impacts voting behavior. Linking studies 4, 5, and 6.

In sum, the goal of this chapter is to explore whether activating the consumer role (vs. the citizen role) promotes political conservatism and whether this effect is moderated by individual differences in consumer role boundaries. In two studies, I test the effect of this interaction on voting intentions (study 5) and actual voting behavior (study 6) in the 2012 American Presidential Election. I find that when participants have weaker consumer role boundaries, being exposed to a consumer role prime increased exchange orientation, which subsequently increased intentions to vote for Republican Nominee Mitt Romney.

6.2 Study 5

6.2.1 Design and Procedure

American adults between the ages of 18 and 65 ($n = 166$; 48% male; $M_{\text{age}} = 39$) were recruited by an online panel to participate in a short study in exchange for a nominal fee. The study was collected in mid-October 2012, approximately three weeks before the 2012 American Presidential Election. Participants were exposed to either a consumer role prime or a citizen role prime. The experimental manipulation was conveyed by the initial task instructions (Bauer et al., 2012). In the consumer role condition, the heading for the instructions was “Studying American Consumers’ Political Opinions.” In the citizen role condition, the heading was “Studying American Citizens’ Political Opinions.” The instructions were as follows:

This is a study of American consumers’ (citizens’) political opinions. We are interested in your evaluations of President Obama. This study is in no way affiliated with any government or polling organization. All responses will be kept anonymous. To partake in this study, you must be an American consumer (citizen). Please confirm your eligibility by indicating that you are an American consumer (citizen).

I am an American consumer (citizen).

After the manipulation, participants reported their voting intentions and completed the exchange orientation scale and the consumer role boundaries scale. Finally, I collected basic demographics and potential covariates. Because this prime is more involved than the prime used in the previous study (i.e., participants had to explicitly state they were an American consumer), I was confident activation would reach exchange orientation and thus, did not measure the more proximal prime-related thoughts.

6.2.2 Measures

6.2.2.1 Exchange Orientation

Exchange orientation was measured with 16 items (Murstein et al., 1987, $\alpha = .85$). All items used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*).

6.2.2.2 Voting Intentions

Voting intentions were measured with two 7-point Likert items: “If you vote in the upcoming presidential election, how likely is it you will vote for Barack Obama (Mitt Romney)?” (1 = *very unlikely* to 7 = *very likely*; $r = -.77, p < .01$).

6.2.2.3 Consumer Role Boundaries

Consumer role boundaries were measured with seven items (Whelan et al., 2011, 2013). Four items were used to measure physical boundaries ($\alpha = .83$) and three items were used to measure monetary boundaries ($\alpha = .79$). All items used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) and were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate stronger boundaries.

6.2.2.4 Covariates

I also measured a number of potential covariates. These included basic demographics (age and gender) and a measure of political orientation (“How would you describe your political orientation?” 1 = *very liberal* to 9 = *very conservative*; hereafter, “conservatism”). Age and gender were not significant covariates and were dropped from further analysis.

Conservatism was significant and thus, is included in all of the following analysis. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables are displayed in table 10.

Table 10: Study 5 means, standard deviations, and correlations between model variables.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>	<i>5.</i>	<i>6.</i>
1. Physical boundaries	4.35	1.55	—	-.10	-.51**	-.18*	.01	.17*
2. Monetary boundaries	5.01	1.31		—	.22**	.07	.05	.05
3. Exchange orientation	4.54	.89			—	.18*	.01	-.13
4. Intentions to vote for Romney	3.18	2.36				—	-.73**	.45**
5. Intentions to vote for Obama	4.69	2.51					—	-.56**
6. Conservatism†	4.63	2.25						—

†*Note*—all items were measured using a 7-point scale, except conservatism, which was measured with a 9-point scale.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

6.2.3 Results

To test my hypotheses, I conducted a moderated mediation analysis using the macro developed by Hayes (2013, model 9, figure 9, table 11). This model estimated the effect of the consumer role prime on voting intentions⁵ (a separate model was analyzed for intentions to vote for Romney and intentions to vote for Obama) directly as well as indirectly through exchange orientation, with the indirect effect through intentions moderated by physical boundaries and monetary boundaries. The consumer role prime was dummy coded (0 = citizen; 1 = consumer). Physical boundaries, monetary boundaries, and exchange orientation were mean-centered, and I controlled statistically for the effect of conservatism on voting intentions.

⁵ The main effects of the consumer role prime on intentions to vote for Romney ($F(1, 166) = .51$) and intentions to vote for Obama ($F(1, 166) = .22$) were not significant (both $ps > .40$).

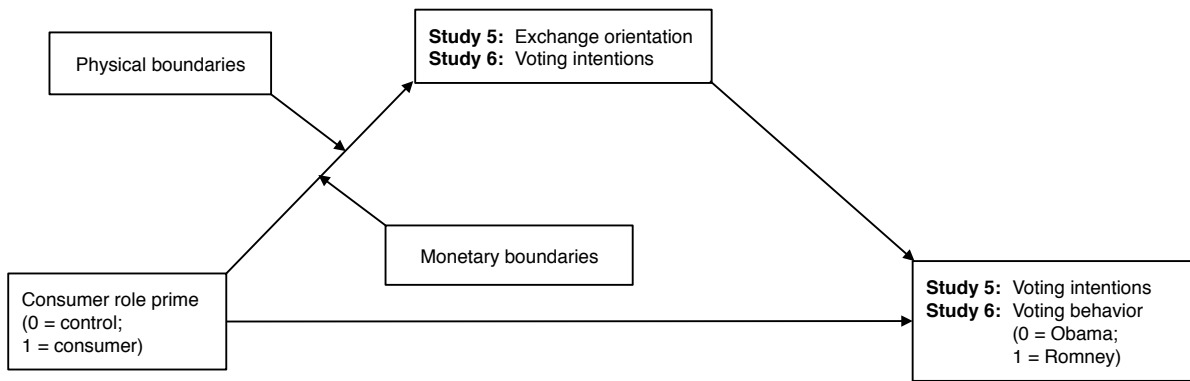


Figure 9: Study 5 and 6 conceptual model.

Table 11: Study 5 model coefficients.

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>MEDIATOR</i>			<i>OUTCOMES[†]</i>					
	<i>Exchange orientation</i>			<i>Intentions to vote for Romney</i>			<i>Intentions to vote for Obama</i>		
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(160)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(162)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(162)</i>
Constant	4.58	.06	79.16***	-1.87	.95	-1.97*	8.68	.96	9.04***
Prime	.24	.12	2.06*	.26	.32	.82	.13	.33	.41
Exchange orientation (mediator)	—	—	—	.60	.18	3.26**	-.23	.19	-1.23
Physical boundaries	-.28	.04	-7.61***	—	—	—	—	—	—
Prime x physical boundaries	-.14	.07	-1.84 [†]	—	—	—	—	—	—
Monetary boundaries	.09	.04	2.11*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Prime x monetary boundaries	-.20	.09	-2.26*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Conservatism (covariate)	—	—	—	.51	.07	7.10***	-.63	.07	-8.73***
	$R^2 = .33$			$R^2 = .26$			$R^2 = .32$		
	$F(5, 160) = 15.91***$			$F(3, 162) = 19.01***$			$F(3, 162) = 25.56***$		

[†]For each outcome, a separate model was analyzed.

[†] $p < .10$

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

6.2.3.1 Exchange Orientation

The consumer role prime ($\beta = .24$, $t(160) = 2.06$, $p < .05$), physical boundaries ($\beta = -.28$, $t(160) = -7.61$, $p < .001$), and monetary boundaries ($\beta = .09$, $t(160) = 2.11$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted exchange orientation. Most importantly, the interaction between the consumer role prime and physical boundaries ($\beta = -.14$, $t(160) = -1.84$, $p = .06$) and the consumer role prime and monetary boundaries ($\beta = -.20$, $t(160) = -2.26$, $p < .05$) significantly predicted exchange orientation.

6.2.3.2 Intentions to Vote for Romney

The indirect effect of the consumer role prime on intentions to vote for Romney via exchange orientation was significantly moderated by consumer boundaries. When physical boundaries and monetary boundaries were both weaker (1 SD below the mean), both average (at the mean), or one was weaker and the other was average, the conditional indirect effect of the consumer role prime on intentions to vote for Romney was significantly mediated by exchange orientation (all confidence intervals excluded 0; table 12). When strategies were stronger (1 SD above the mean), the conditional indirect effect of the

consumer role prime on intentions to vote for Romney was not significant (all confidence intervals included 0; table 12).

Table 12: Study 5 conditional indirect effect of consumer role prime at values of the moderators.

<i>Values of the moderators</i>		<i>Via exchange orientation</i>					
		<i>Intentions to vote for Romney</i>			<i>Intentions to vote for Obama</i>		
<i>Physical</i>	<i>Monetary</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
-1 SD	-1 SD	.43	.14	.87	-.16	-.52	.08
-1 SD	M	.27	.08	.58	-.10	-.35	.05
-1 SD	+1 SD	.11	-.08	.44	-.04	-.28	.03
M	-1 SD	.30	.10	.70	-.12	-.41	.05
M	M	.14	.01	.41	-.05	-.24	.02
M	+1 SD	-.02	-.25	.21	.01	-.09	.15
+1 SD	-1 SD	.17	-.07	.56	-.07	-.38	.04
+1 SD	M	.01	-.22	.27	-.01	-.17	.09
+1 SD	+1 SD	-.14	-.50	.11	.05	-.04	.40

Bold indicates significant conditional indirect effect (confidence interval excludes 0).

6.2.3.3 Intentions to Vote for Obama

Neither the direct effect of the consumer role prime nor the indirect effect of the consumer role prime via exchange orientation significantly predicted intentions to vote for Obama (all confidence intervals included 0; table 12).

6.2.4 Discussion

Consistent with my hypotheses, study 5 demonstrates that consumer role activation can significantly affect voting intentions and that this effect is moderated by individual differences in consumer role boundaries and mediated by exchange orientation. For participants with weaker consumer role boundaries, being exposed to a consumer role prime increased exchange orientation, which then resulted in stronger intentions to vote for Romney. When either physical boundaries or monetary boundaries were stronger, the consumer role prime did not significantly affect intentions to vote for Romney. While study 5 provides the first empirical evidence that consumer role activation can influence voting intentions, study 6 examines whether consumer role activation can significantly impact actual voting behavior. In addition, study 6 introduces a control condition to determine whether the effects observed in study 5 were driven by the consumer role prime or by the citizen role prime.

6.3 Study 6

6.3.1 Design and Procedure

American adults between the ages of 18 and 65 ($n = 475$) were recruited by an online panel to complete a two-part study. Part 1 was collected approximately one week before Election Day (November 6, 2012), and part 2 was collected a few days after the election. My final sample consisted of 349 Americans (44% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 44$) who completed both parts of the study and who reported voting for either Obama or Romney in the 2012 Election.

In part 1, participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: consumer role prime, citizen role prime, or control condition. As in study 5, the manipulation was delivered in the study instructions by explicitly referring to participants as either “American consumers,” “American citizens,” or in the control condition, “Americans.” After reading the instructions, participants indicated their intentions to vote for Obama and Romney. Approximately one week later, participants completed part 2. Participants reported whom they voted for (“Who did you vote for in the 2012 presidential election: Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, other, or did not vote?”) and completed the consumer role boundaries scale and a number of control variables, including basic demographics and an established measure of conservatism.

6.3.2 Measures

6.3.2.1 Voting Intentions

Voting intentions were measured with two 7-point Likert items: “If you vote in the upcoming presidential election, how likely is it you will vote for Barack Obama (Mitt Romney)?” (1 = *very unlikely* to 7 = *very likely*; $r = -.93, p < .01$). Because of the high correlation, intentions to vote for Obama was reverse coded and a voting intentions composite was formed, with higher scores indicating greater intentions to vote for Romney ($\alpha = .96$).

6.3.2.2 Consumer Role Boundary Strength

Consumer role boundaries were measured with seven items (Whelan et al., 2011, 2013). Four items were used to measure physical boundaries ($\alpha = .84$) and three items were used to measure monetary boundaries ($\alpha = .74$). All items used a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*) and were reverse-coded so that higher scores indicate stronger boundaries

6.3.2.3 Covariates

Covariates included basic demographics (age and gender) and a 12-item measure of political conservatism (Henningham, 1996) (appendix I). Age and gender were not significant covariates and were dropped from further analysis. Conservatism was significant and thus, is included in all of the following analysis. Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the continuous study variables are displayed in table 13.

Table 13: Study 6 means, standard deviations, and correlations between *continuous* model variables.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1.</i>	<i>2.</i>	<i>3.</i>	<i>4.</i>
1. Physical boundaries	4.57	1.46	—	-.08	.20**	-.07
2. Monetary boundaries	4.80	1.28		—	.00	.07
3. Intentions	3.59	2.64			—	.46**
4. Conservatism†	22.53	5.81				

†*Note*—conservatism was calculated by summing responses to 12 questions, with a potential range of 12 to 36.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

6.3.3 Results

To test my hypotheses, I conducted a moderated mediation analysis using the macro developed by Hayes (2013, model 9, figure 9, table 14). This model estimated the effect of the consumer role prime on actual voting behavior⁶ directly as well as indirectly with the indirect effect through intentions moderated by physical boundaries and monetary boundaries. Both the consumer role prime (0 = control; 1 = consumer) and citizen role prime

⁶ The main effect of the consumer role prime on actual voting behavior was not significant ($\chi^2(1) = .58, p > .40$).

were dummy coded (0 = control; 1 = citizen). Physical boundaries, monetary boundaries, and intentions were mean-centered, and I controlled for conservatism. Neither the citizen role prime nor the interactive effects of the citizen role prime and the two types of consumer role boundaries were significant (see appendix J for all initial model coefficients); thus, they were dropped from all subsequent analysis.

Table 14: Study 6 final model coefficients.

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>MEDIATOR</i>			<i>OUTCOME</i>		
	<i>Voting intentions^a</i>			<i>Actual vote</i>		
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(342)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>
Constant	-1.36	.48	-2.82**	-7.82	1.79	-4.36**
Consumer prime	.09	.26	.35	-.78	.69	-1.12
Voting intentions (mediator)	—	—	—	2.00	.30	6.75***
Physical boundaries	.44	.08	5.32***	—	—	—
Consumer prime x physical boundaries	-.40	.17	-2.31*	—	—	—
Monetary boundaries	-.02	.09	-.19	—	—	—
Consumer prime x monetary boundaries	-.51	.20	-2.55*	—	—	—
Conservatism (covariate)	.22	.02	10.56***	-.01	.07	-.07
	$R^2 = .29$			Nagelkerke $R^2 = .92$		
	$F(6, 342) = 23.40***$					

^aHigher values indicate stronger intentions to vote for Romney.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

6.3.3.1 Voting intentions

Conservatism ($\beta = .22$, $t(342) = 10.56$, $p < .01$) and physical boundaries ($\beta = .44$, $t(342) = 5.32$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted intentions. The consumer role prime ($\beta = .09$, $t(342) = .35$) and monetary boundaries ($\beta = -.02$, $t(342) = -.19$) did not significantly predict intentions. Most importantly, the interactions between the consumer role prime and physical boundaries ($\beta = -.40$, $t(342) = -2.31$, $p < .01$) and the consumer role prime and monetary boundaries ($\beta = -.51$, $t(342) = -2.55$, $p < .01$) significantly predicted intentions.

6.3.3.2 Actual voting behavior

The indirect effect of the consumer role prime via voting intentions was significantly moderated by consumer role boundaries. When *both* physical boundaries and monetary boundaries were weaker (1 SD below the mean), the conditional indirect effect of the consumer role prime on voting was significantly mediated by intentions ($\beta = 2.65$), with a 95% confidence interval excluding zero (.54, 5.58; table 15). When *both* types of boundaries

were stronger (1 SD above the mean), the effect of the consumer role prime was also significant—albeit in the reverse direction ($\beta = -2.29$, 95% CI [-4.90, -.31]; table 15). When *either* physical boundaries or monetary boundaries were stronger (1 SD above the mean), the conditional indirect effect of the consumer role prime on voting was not significant (all confidence intervals included 0; table 15).

Table 15: Study 6 conditional indirect effect of the consumer role prime at values of the moderators.

<i>Values of the moderators</i>		<i>Via intentions</i>		
		<i>Vote</i> (0 = Obama; 1 = Romney)		
<i>Physical</i>	<i>Monetary</i>	<i>Effect</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>
-1 SD	-1 SD	2.65	.54	5.58
-1 SD	M	1.34	-.28	2.97
-1 SD	+1 SD	.02	-1.90	1.81
M	-1 SD	1.50	-.30	3.76
M	M	.18	-1.00	1.43
M	+1 SD	-1.14	-2.97	.38
+1 SD	-1 SD	.34	-2.06	2.62
+1 SD	M	-.98	-3.14	.61
+1 SD	+1 SD	-2.29	-4.90	-.31

Bold indicates significant conditional indirect effect (confidence interval excludes 0).

6.3.4 Discussion

Providing additional support for H₃ and H₅, study 6 demonstrates that for participants weaker in both types of consumer role boundaries, the consumer role prime increased intentions to vote for Romney. In contrast, when participants had stronger physical boundaries and stronger monetary boundaries, the consumer role prime decreased intentions to vote for Romney. In both cases, voting intentions subsequently influenced actual voting behavior.

Though unexpected, the reverse effect observed when both types of consumer role boundaries were stronger could be due to those participants attempting to “correct” for the influence of the consumer role prime. According to the correction literature, when people detect an unwanted and/or extreme source of bias, they try to correct for its potential influence (Williams, Fitzsimons, & Block, 2004; Wilson & Brekke, 1994). Often, they over-correct, resulting in the opposite or reverse effect (Glaser & Banaji, 1999). For example,

whereas brand logos result in basic priming effects, brand slogans result in reverse priming effects because slogans, and not logos, are viewed as a source of unwanted bias (Laran, Dalton, & Andrade, 2011). Further, these corrections can occur nonconsciously (Laran et al., 2011), as was most likely the case in study 6. More research is needed to better understand when and why consumer role primes and consumer role boundaries interact to result in reverse priming effects.

Chapter 7

7 Contributions and Implications

The primary goal of this dissertation was to demonstrate the merits of studying the consumer role with a cognitive role theory perspective. In four chapters and six experiments, I show that a cognitive role theoretic approach can be used to guide our exploration of specific consumer role associations (chapter 3 and 4), the process by which consumer role activation occurs (chapter 5), and the consequences of activating the consumer role in non-consumer domains (chapter 6).

7.1 Contributions to Role Theory

My conceptualization of roles as networks of associations helps address one of role theory's most persistent and damaging criticisms—its failure to provide support for its basic proposition that roles influence behavior (Biddle, 1986). Because role theory has traditionally focused on behavior (Lynch, 2007), a more cognitive conceptualization of roles has been neglected. Though new developments in role theory share the assumption that roles are “sustained by cognitive structures” (Collier & Calerro, 2005, p. 46), few have explored what these cognitive structures may look like and/or how they may affect cognitive processing. One notable exception is Collier and Calerro's (2005) work on the role of *recycler*. Using standard response latency measures, they find that, relative to participants in the control condition, participants who had experienced a six-week intervention designed to introduce the recycler role responded more quickly to actions (e.g., give old clothes to charity) and adjectives (e.g., responsible) that were “seen as representative of a recycler” (p. 51). Importantly, that work stops short of examining how roles as cognitive structures shape subsequent cognition, perception, and behavior. Here, by explicitly conceptualizing the consumer role as a network of associations; demonstrating that present orientation, exchange orientation, and materialism are important associations of this network; and exploring the consequences of consumer role activation on behavior, I have taken a

promising step forward to elucidating a more cognitive and experimentally testable characterization of roles.

However, despite the usefulness of role theory in guiding my research questions, methods, and interpretations, I cannot be sure that a role, as opposed to some other cognitive representation, is being activated. Further, unless role activation can be empirically distinguished from goal activation and semantic activation, the contribution of a more cognitive characterization of roles is likely to be overlooked. Though the complexity of study 4 suggests something beyond a single trait is being activated, future research could explicitly compare the activation pattern of roles to that of semantic constructs (e.g., traits) and goals⁷. Just as there are seven principles that can be used *post hoc* to distinguish between goal activation and semantic activation (Förster et al., 2007), similar principles should also exist when it comes to distinguishing role activation. One potential principal of role activation involves the temporal pattern of activation. Whereas the effects of semantic activation decrease immediately after exposure to the prime and the effects of goal activation decrease upon goal fulfillment (Förster et al., 2007), I propose that the effects of role activation should only decrease upon role exit. Role exit occurs when an individual leaves one role and enters another (i.e., a different role is activated). For example, after arriving home from the mall, an individual may exit the consumer role and enter his parent role. Even if goal fulfillment occurs while in a role, the effects of the role should persist until role exit. For example, while in the consumer role, one may adopt and fulfill the goal of purchasing a new sweater. Nevertheless, the role should continue to affect the individual's behavior, perhaps even leading to the adoption of new role-relevant goals, until he or she transitions into a different role.

⁷ It is important to note that neither role activation nor goal activation imply the absence of semantic activation. Indeed, it is hard to imagine how any sort of priming could occur without first activating associated semantic constructs. Consequently, Sela and Shiv (2009) argue, “goal activation should be thought of as occurring on top of any initial semantic activation, to the extent that other conditions are also met” (e.g., perception of a self-discrepant state; p. 422). Likewise, role activation should also be thought of as occurring on top of semantic activation.

The distinct temporal pattern of role activation is especially important in distinguishing between role activation and the semantic activation of stereotypes. Because stereotypes can be part of a role (Eagly & Karau, 2002), confusion and conceptual overlap are inevitable. Conceptually, roles can be distinguished from stereotypes according to their target. Whereas roles concern social positions, stereotypes concern groups. However, because social positions often occur in the context of a larger group, distinguishing the two constructs on the basis of the target word alone is nearly impossible (e.g., “professor” could trigger the role of professor as well as stereotypes about professors). Fortunately, because role activation and semantic activation should have distinct temporal patterns, the type of mental representation activated should be evident in a post hoc analysis of the effects of the prime over time. For this reason, I believe that a series of articles purporting to demonstrate the effects of stereotypes about professors, secretaries, soccer hooligans, and supermodels actually demonstrates the effects of activating these various roles (Dijksterhuis et al., 1998; Dijksterhuis & Van Knippenberg, 1998, 2000). Specifically, when they look for it, they find no evidence of decay of the effects of the stereotype on behavior. In their conclusion, they suggest this could be because participants were “in the process of applying the primed construct one way or another” (Dijksterhuis & Van Knippenberg, 1998, p. 873). Alternatively, I argue their primes went beyond semantic activation and actually resulted in role activation. This seems especially likely given the role-like nature of their primes (e.g., imagine a typical professor for five minutes and list the behaviors, lifestyle, and appearance attributes of this typical professor). Not only was the prime more involved than most stereotype primes (e.g., word scramble tasks), but it was also far more encompassing than a single stereotype. This line of reasoning may also shed light on why I failed to detect significant results in studies 2 and 3. It is plausible that my prime simply was not involved enough to spread beyond mere semantic activation and reach more distal associations (Collins & Loftus, 1975).

This also raises interesting questions regarding when the same prime results in semantic, goal, or role activation. That is, how can researchers predict *a priori* whether a prime will activate a role versus a goal versus a trait? Recently, consumer researchers have argued that a prime will be most likely to result in goal activation (versus semantic activation) when individuals are currently in a goal-discrepant state. Specifically, Sela and Shiv (2009) find

that when a prime is consistent with an individual's self-concept, it affects behavior in a manner consistent with semantic activation (i.e., the effects diminish over time). In contrast, when a prime is discrepant from an individual's self-concept, it affects behavior in a manner consistent with goal activation (i.e., the effects escalate over time). When it comes to predicting whether a prime will activate a role, one important determinant may be the strength of individuals' role boundaries. When boundaries are weaker, the prime should be more likely to activate the associated role. When boundaries are stronger, the prime should only result in semantic activation. Testing these propositions and examining other distinctions between role, goal, and semantic activation is an interesting opportunity for future research.

7.2 Contributions to Consumer Research

For consumer research, this dissertation presents a framework for studying the influence of the consumer role in both consumer and non-consumer domains—an area that has been relatively understudied. In her 2002 ACR presidential address, Folkes pleaded for a “slightly different research strategy”—one that would compare consumer with non-consumer behavior, as opposed to comparing behaviors within the consumption domain. Similarly, MacInnis and Folkes (2010) recently defined consumer behavior as the study of people operating in the consumer role, arguing that such a perspective “may allow researchers to produce original knowledge about consumer behavior (and human behavior) by understanding how a consumer role changes behavior” (p. 907). I believe my dissertation provides a foundation to propel such research. Examining how the consumer role influences behavior becomes a matter of identifying consumer role associations and testing whether various consumer role primes activate such associations, as moderated by consumer role boundaries. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, I am the first to demonstrate the real-world consequences of consumer role activation on preferences and behaviors not traditionally associated with being a consumer. In studies 5 and 6, when participants had weaker consumer role boundaries, the consumer role prime increased intentions to vote conservative, which subsequently influenced actual voting behavior in the 2012 American Presidential Election. This raises interesting questions—and perhaps a note of caution—regarding the effects that consumer cues may have in other nontraditional consumer

domains. For example, my findings suggest that viewing students and patients as education and healthcare consumers is more than just a metaphor and could actually have profound effects on actual behavior. More research is needed to comprehend the true nature and consequences of such effects.

My conceptualization of the consumer role also has the potential to unify a number of existing but seemingly unrelated findings. Over the past decade, a number of articles have demonstrated the effects of various consumer-related stimuli. For example, the self-sufficiency theory of money is based on findings that reminders of money lead to more independent and self-focused behavior (Vohs et al., 2006, 2008); work on “Cuing Consumerism” shows that luxury consumer goods and consumer terminology can increase materialistic behavior (Bauer et al., 2012); and logos of iconic American brands (e.g., Nike, McDonald’s) make people more impatient (Chen et al., 2005). To the extent that these various cues can be conceptualized as consumer role primes, it seems plausible that their effects may actually be indicative of consumer role activation.

In addition, a role theoretic approach to the study of the consumer role presents interesting opportunities for examining how this role interacts with and relates to other life roles. Specifically, future research should examine consumer role compensation. Compensation occurs when individuals cope with dissatisfaction or unmet needs in one role by seeking satisfaction and need fulfillment from a different role (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). This could be due to insufficient positive experiences (e.g., an individual with little autonomy at work may seek out the consumer role as a means to exercising control) or as a coping mechanism for excess negative experiences (e.g., engaging in retail therapy to avoid thinking about family problems). Given that for some, the consumer role may be the only role in their lives that provides respect, courtesy, and attendance to their needs (Wänke, 2009), the likelihood of consumer role compensation seems especially high.

Furthermore, to the extent that the consumer role is automatically associated with positive benefits for the self, simply being in a state of consumer role activation may be sufficient to compensate for unmet needs. On the surface, this seems highly positive; consumer role activation, after all, may make people feel better about themselves. However, a note of

caution is necessary. If the consumer role is an inadequate substitute for individuals' needs, it could do more harm than good—over time, it could lead to further thwarting of need satisfaction (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Thus, examining consumer role compensation, including both its short-term and long-term effects, is an interesting area for debate and future research.

7.3 Implications

As discussed in the introduction, there is a shared suspicion that consumer role activation can have powerful, and potentially negative, influences on behavior; nevertheless, consumer researchers have only begun to explore the traits, characteristics, and goals that can be activated by culturally omnipresent consumer cues. By demonstrating that consumer cues can activate a materialistic, present-oriented, and exchange-oriented consumer role, my dissertation provides evidence that such concerns are valid. Further, the more we understand the consumer role as a network of associations, the more we will understand consumer behavior *in general*, as this role is likely to be active during most purchase decisions. Consequently, marketers can either use this role to their advantage or they can avoid activating the consumer role when they believe a different role may be more favorable for business. To illustrate, marketers could make immediate gratification part of their product offering, for example, by offering “free” two-day shipping (as is the case with Amazon Prime), or when waiting is simply inevitable, they could attempt to trigger a less present-oriented role. For example, my findings suggests that Disney is correct to label its theme park visitors as ‘guests,’ since ‘consumers’ may be much less willing to wait in Disney’s notoriously long line-ups. Furthermore, given that the consumer role can be activated by mere exposure to consumer role primes, my research underscores the importance of context. Encouraging individuals to engage in more future-oriented and other-oriented behaviors (e.g., sustainable consumption, charitable donations, purchasing insurance) may not necessitate a change in conversation—it may just require a change of venue, a venue in which consumer role primes are noticeably absent.

Chapter 8

8 Bibliography

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Appendices

Appendix A: Role Theory in Marketing

<i>Author/Date</i>	<i>Journal</i>	<i>Perspective</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Method</i>	<i>Contribution/Findings</i>
1. Ward (1974)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Functional	Consumer socialization	--	Reviews literature on consumer socialization and outlines three directions for future research: consumer socialization processes, content of learning, and permanence of early learning.
2. Moschis and Churchill (1978)	<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	Functional	Consumer socialization	Survey	Examines relationships between selected consumer skills and adolescents' interactions with different social agents (e.g., family, mass media).
3. Moschis and Churchill (1979)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Functional	Adolescent consumer behavior	Survey	Examines correlations among typical consumer role skills (e.g., product differentiation, managing personal finances) and the age, sex, and socio-economic status of adolescents.
4. John (1999)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Functional	Consumer socialization	--	Reviews 25 years of consumer socialization research and presents a conceptual framework for understanding consumer socialization as a series of stages that coincide with children's cognitive and social development.
5. Solomon (1983)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Product symbolism	--	Presents eight propositions detailing how product symbolism can mediate self-conception and role performance.
6. Solomon, Suprenant, Czepiel, and Gutman (1985)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Service encounters	--	Proposes service encounters can be characterized as role performances and that they will be successful to the degree that the actors live up to their role expectations.

7.	Schouten (1991)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Cosmetic surgery	Depth interviews	By making physical attributes more congruent with role expectations, cosmetic surgery can ultimately contribute to a more successful role performance. This is especially prevalent during major role transitions.
8.	Deighton (1992)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Consumption as performance	--	Conceptualizes consumption as performance and marketers as scripting, directing, and producing performances.
9.	Otnes, Lowrey, and Kim (1993)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Gift-giving	Depth interviews and shopping with informants	Gift-givers attempt to express desired roles through the purchased gift. Identifies six types of roles: pleaser, provider, compensator, socializer, acknowledger, and avoider.
10.	Bitner, Booms, and Mohr (1994)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Symbolic interactionism/ Organizational	Service encounters from employees' perspective	Survey using critical incident technique	Employees and customers share parallel views of their roles and generally share the same sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction within service encounters. However, employees identify an additional source of dissatisfaction: the customer's misbehavior.
11.	McGrath and Otnes (1995)	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Influence among strangers in a market setting	Depth interviews, participant observation, and shopping with informants	Propose a typology of roles that may be assumed by strangers interacting in a consumer context. The typology includes roles for both the influencers and the recipients of influence.
12.	Arnett, German, and Hunt (2003)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Identity salience model of relationship marketing success	Survey	Identity salience mediates the effects of participation, reciprocity, prestige, and satisfaction on donating to and promoting one's alma mater.
13.	Holt and Thompson (2004)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Masculine identity construction	Discourse analysis, depth interviews, participant observation	Men resolve conflict arising from the "breadwinner" identity and the "rebel" identity by pursuing the "man-of-action hero" identity.
14.	Schau, Gilly, and Wolfinger	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Consumption in retirement	Depth interviews, participant	Retirees use consumption to adopt new micro-roles, resulting in "consumer

	(2009)			observation, and online forums	identity renaissance.” These roles may or may not be consistent with past roles.	
15.	Fombelle, et al. (2012)	<i>Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science</i>	Symbolic interactionism	Identity synergy as an antecedent to organizational identification	Survey	Identity synergy, which occurs when an organization facilitates the performance of multiple social roles, is positively related to identification with an organization.
16.	Barnhart and Peñaloza (2013)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	The processes by which the elderly construct their “old age” identity	Depth interviews	Elderly consumers negotiate their identity in relation to the identity imposed on them by family members and paid service providers.
17.	Moisio, Arnould, and Gentry (2013)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Symbolic interactionism	DIY in men’s identity work and class-specific identity conflicts	Depth interviews	Men use DIY and home improvement projects to construct masculine identities. Social class influences identity ideals and identity conflicts.
18.	Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1977)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Organizational	Motivation and performance of salespersons	--	Discusses potential antecedents and consequences of role inaccuracy, ambiguity, and conflict on salespersons.
19.	Reilly (1982)	<i>Journal of Consumer Research</i>	Organizational	Wife’s employment and family convenience consumption	Interviews and questionnaires	Finds a small, but significant, relationship between role overload and convenience consumption. Results suggest that employment does not always lead to role overload for married women.
20.	Smith and Barclay (1997)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Organizational	Selling partner relationships (“selling alliances”)	Survey	Develops and tests a model of the direct and indirect influences of organizational factors and perceived trustworthiness on task performance and satisfaction. Perceived role competence is one component of trustworthiness.
21.	Singh (2000)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Organizational	Productivity and quality of frontline employees	Survey	The effects of role stressors on frontline productivity and quality are mediated by burnout.

22.	Heide and Wathne (2006)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Organizational	Roles in marketing relationships	--	Presents a conceptual framework of roles in marketing relationships. Proposes that firms can use relationship strategies to create and activate different relationship roles, specifically, businessperson or friend.
23.	Grayson (2007)	<i>Journal of Marketing</i>	Organizational	Roles in marketing relationships	Survey	Examines potential conflict between business and friend roles in marketing relationships. Proposes how and why friendship in marketing relationships can be good and bad.
24.	Homburg, Müller, and Klarmann (2011)	<i>Journal of Academy of Marketing Science</i>	Organizational	Effects of relational and functional customer orientation on customer loyalty	Survey	Customer communication style and product characteristics moderate the effectiveness of customer-oriented behaviors.
25.	Alreck, Settle, and Belch (1992)	<i>Journal of Advertising Research</i>	Gender	The effect of "gendering" brands and individual sex-role adherence on brand choice	Survey	Women are more accepting of masculine brands than men are of feminine brands; men highlight gender distinctions.
26.	Scott, Mende, and Bolton (2013)	<i>Journal of Marketing Research</i>	Gender (Role congruity theory)	The inferences consumers make about sellers' conspicuous consumption	Experiments	Consumers' inferences about conspicuous sellers are moderated by salient relationship norms (i.e., communal vs. exchange).
27.	Sherry et al. (2004)	<i>Journal of Consumer Psychology</i>	Gender/Symbolic interactionism	Gendered behavior at ESPN Zone Chicago	Depth interviews, participant observation, and photography	Retail environments can be designed to elicit and reinforce specific gender roles and relationships among roles.

Appendix B: Study 2 and 3 Word Cloud Manipulations

Consumer



Control



Appendix C: Consumer Role Boundaries Measure

Consumer role boundaries (Whelan et al., 2011, 2013)

Physical boundaries:

1. Emails from favorite stores are a welcome distraction from other tasks (r)
 2. Most of my bookmarked websites are online stores (r)
 3. I keep pictures of things I want to buy in places where I will frequently see them (r)
 4. I subscribe to a lot of catalogues and/or store emails (r)
-

Monetary boundaries:

5. I only go shopping when I have money to spend
 6. I only let myself think about shopping when I know I can afford it
 7. My budget plays a big part in determining when I go shopping
-

1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*

(r) *indicates reverse-scored item*

Appendix D: Prime-Related Thoughts Measure

Prime-related thoughts

1. I think seeing those pictures made me want something new
 2. I think seeing those pictures made me happy
 3. I think seeing those pictures made me think about things I want to buy
 4. I am hoping that I can afford some of the pictures I saw in the future
 5. I felt a bit of a rush after seeing those pictures
 6. I think the pictures I saw were frustrating
 7. I think seeing those pictures helped me dream of what my life could be like
-

1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*

Appendix E: Materialism Measure

Materialism (Richins, 2004)

1. I admire people who own expensive homes, cars, and clothes
 2. The things I own say a lot about how well I'm doing in life
 3. I like to own things that impress people
 4. I usually buy only the things I need (r)
 5. I try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned (r)
 6. Buying things gives me a lot of pleasure
 7. My life would be better if I owned certain things I don't have
 8. I'd be happier if I could afford to buy more things
 9. It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the things I'd like
-

1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*
(r) indicates *reverse-scored item*

Appendix F: Present Orientation Measure

Consideration of future consequences—Immediate focus (Joireman et al., 2012; Strathman et al., 1994)

1. I only act to satisfy immediate concerns, figuring the future will take care of itself
 2. My behavior is only influenced by the immediate (i.e., a matter of days or weeks) outcomes of my actions
 3. My convenience is a big factor in the decisions I make or the actions I take
 4. I generally ignore warnings about possible future problems because I think the problems will be resolved before they reach the crisis level
 5. I think that sacrificing now is usually unnecessary since future outcomes can be dealt with a later time
 6. I only act to satisfy immediate concerns, figuring that I will take care of future problems that may occur at a later date
 7. Since my day-to-day work has specific outcomes, it is more important to me than behavior that has distant outcomes
-

1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*

Appendix G: Exchange Orientation Measure

Exchange orientation (Murstein et al., 1987)

1. I usually remember if I owe someone money or if someone owes me money
 2. I usually do not forget if I owe someone a favor or if someone owes me a favor
 3. If I were to campaign for someone running for office, I'd expect some sort of compensation or at least recognition
 4. If I give someone a ride to work on an occasional basis (approximately 6 times a month), then I expect him or her to repay me in some way
 5. When buying a present for someone, I often try to remember the value of what they have given me in the past
 6. If I tell someone about my private affairs (business, family, love experiences), I expect them to tell me something about theirs
 7. I wish people would show more acknowledgement when I say or do nice things to them
 8. I will not send a second email to a friend unless I had received an email or phone call in response to my first email
 9. If I praise a friend for his or her accomplishments, I expect him or her to praise me for mine as well
 10. I don't like people who don't fulfill their obligations to me
 11. If I show up on time for an appointment, I become upset if the person with whom I have the appointment shows up late
 12. If I take a friend out to dinner, I expect him or her to do the same for me sometime
 13. If my partner feels entitled to an evening out with friends of either sex, then I feel entitled to do the same
 14. A student whose education is financed by his or her parents owes his or her parents compensation in some form (respect, obedience, money)
 15. If I do the dishes three times a week, then I expect my partner or roommate to do them three times a week also
 16. It does not matter if people I like do less for me than I do for them (r)
-

1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*
 (r) indicates *reverse-scored item*

Appendix H: Affect Measure

Affect

1. I feel calm
 2. I feel happy
 3. I feel smart
 4. I feel excited
 5. I feel hopeful
-

1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*

Appendix I: Conservatism Measure

Social conservatism (Henningham, 1996)

Please indicate whether you support the following:

1. Death penalty (C)
 2. Multiculturalism (L)
 3. Stiffer jail terms (C)
 4. Voluntary euthanasia (L)
 5. Bible truth (C)
 6. Gay rights (L)
 7. Pre-marital virginity (C)
 8. Asian immigration (L)
 9. Church authority (C)
 10. Legalized abortion (L)
 11. Condom vending machines (L)
 12. Legalized prostitution (L)
-

1 = no; 2 = undecided; 3 = yes

(C) indicates a conservative item; (L) indicates a liberal item. Liberal items were reverse-scored

Appendix J: Study 6 *Initial Model Coefficients*

<i>Predictors</i>	<i>MEDIATOR</i>			<i>OUTCOME</i>		
	<i>Voting intentions^a</i>			<i>Actual vote</i> <i>(0 = Obama; 1 = Romney)</i>		
	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t(339)</i>	<i>Coeff.</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>
Constant	-1.47	.50	-2.92**	-8.05	1.87	-4.29**
Consumer prime	.13	.30	.44	-.78	.83	-.94
Citizen prime	.09	.29	.31	.00	.81	.00
Voting intentions (mediator)	—	—	—	1.97	.29	6.71**
Physical boundaries	.56	.11	4.96**	—	—	—
Consumer prime x physical boundaries	-.57	.21	-2.78**	—	—	—
Citizen prime x physical boundaries	-.33	.21	-1.55	.30	.41	.73
Monetary boundaries	-.05	.13	-.38	—	—	—
Consumer prime x monetary boundaries	-.47	.24	-1.99*	—	—	—
Citizen prime x monetary boundaries	.06	.23	.24	.23	.58	.41
Conservatism (covariate)	.22	.02	10.65***	-.01	.07	-.07
	$R^2 = .29$			Nagelkerke $R^2 = .92$		
	$F(9, 339) = 15.87***$					

^aHigher values indicate stronger intentions to vote for Romney.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .001$.

Curriculum Vitae

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