Family Identity: A Framework of Identity Interplay in Consumption Practices

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"Being a family" is a vitally important collective enterprise central to many consumption experiences and replete with new challenges in contemporary society. We advance a framework to learn how families draw on communication forms and use marketplace resources to manage interplays among individual, relational (e.g., couple, sibling, parent-child), and collective identities. Our framework also outlines potential moderators of this identity-management process. To demonstrate the value of our framework for consumer researchers, we propose numerous research questions and offer applications in the areas of family decision making, consumer socialization, and person-object relations.

> When mom and dad got divorced and mom remarried, everything changed. We, my father and I, had to find a way to create a sense of who we are without mom. We found that a passion for adventure is something we share, that mom and my sister don't, and we took up scuba diving. Although my stepdad is certainly part of our family, my mom, sister, and I are a different "we," with many different stories to tell and a distinct history of shared experiences. Of course, my sister and I are a special "we" too. We can finish each other's sentences, sing the same karaoke songs, and share clothes. Now that she has a boyfriend that "we" is changing too. It felt so strange not sharing popcorn with my sister when the three of us went to a movie this weekend. We, my mom, sister, and I are planning a return trip to Disneyland this summer. This was a family tradition for many years, and we all feel with everything changed and changing, it's important for us as a family. Of course, this trip will include my stepdad too, although so far he hasn't been part of the planning. I wonder if he likes the same rides we do! With all these changes, I'm not sure we would all agree about who we are as a family. Each one of us also is trying hard to establish our own place in the world. My sister loves drama and I spend all my free time on the swim team, but in the evening when we are engaged in sarcastic banter about the latest loser on *American Idol* at mom's or dad's, I know that we are still a "we," a family. (Interview data)

Who are we as a family? This question shapes how we occupy the family room in the evening, interact over our favorite television shows, remodel our kitchen, plan vacations, wash our clothes, display our family's special objects, and schedule dental appointments. Yet it is a complicated question. This vignette highlights how diverse identity practices coexist and interplay in everyday experiences of doing family. Each family houses unique bundles of identities, including the family's collective identity, smaller groups' (e.g., siblings, couples, parent-child) relational identities, and individual family members' identities. Any "we" may perform its own rituals, stories, social dramas, everyday interactions, and intergenerational transfers and may be challenged and changed as it interacts with other identity bundles.

We contend that "being a family" is a collective enterprise that is central to many consumption experiences and replete with challenges in contemporary society (Finch and Mason 2000; Gerstel, Clawson, and Zussman 2002; Giddens 1992; McGoldrick and Giordano 1996; Morgan 1996; Smart and Neale 1999; Stone 2001). As families construct identity, they face competing interests and demands, increasingly elective and fluid interpersonal relationships, and blended family

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forms that depart from prevailing ideals. Further, because these identity bundles are embedded in the normalcy of everyday life and the dominant scientific discourses of "selfhood" and "family," family consumer researchers and family researchers more generally neglect the complex interplay of individual, relational, and collective identity practices depicted in the vignette. Specifically, we observe three limitations of existing theory.

First, current theories, research questions, and methods in the domain of family consumption lack consideration of truly collective enterprises. Instead, family consumer research has been dominated by a concern with how individuals influence and orchestrate family consumption, generally emphasizing how individuals negotiate outcomes within a family (Commuri and Gentry 2005), how individuals influence other family members (Cotte and Wood 2004; Moore, Wilkie, and Lutz 2002), how individuals represent family as aspects of their extended selves (Tian and Belk 2005), or how individuals alter their decision-making practices to reflect concerns for family (Aaker and Lee 2001; Hamilton and Biehal 2005). This narrow focus on individuals within collectivities is not without consequences. For example, consumer researchers consistently conclude that firms should make decisions about positioning strategies and who to target based upon individual family members' decision roles and relative influence in households (Commuri and Gentry 2000). However, this completely misses the point that families countenance a range of possible identities (collective, relational, and individual) that affect collective decisions. Consequently, firms might gain more value from positioning and targeting based on the idea that products, services, and brands act as resources for achieving relational and family identity goals.

Second, theory does not adequately account for the role of different relational units in structuring family activities and time. Previous family research emphasizes how parents, especially mothers, orchestrate family activities and time predominantly within the narrow confines of a household. For example, DeVault's (1991) exemplary work uncovers how women's emotional labor is constitutive of family; her work conforms to diverse disciplinary depictions of the quotidian feminine enterprise of caring and sacrifice in pursuit of family well-being (Hochschild 1997; Miller 1998; Thompson 1996). However, what do children provide to family identity practices (DeVault 2003)? What do fathers do with children that mothers do not (Lareau 2000)? How does couple time compete with family time and relate to family well-being (Roxburgh 2006)? Prevailing treatments of family consumption do not allow us to account for how or when a family-level identity practice gets displaced by a relational identity practice, such as in the opening vignette.

Third, theory does not accommodate the ebb and flow of individuals, relational units, and families into and out of households. Prior family research includes richly textured ethnographic descriptions of families often absent a theoretical lens. For instance, DeVault (2000) observes how a family moves together and apart on a trip to the zoo but does not uncover the individual, relational, and family identity practices that account for these movements. Similarly, ethnography uncovers "the 6 o'clock crash" when families come together at the end of the day (Larson and Richards 1994) but lacks a theory for understanding how individual and relational identities collide in this space and time. Finally, Daly (1996) describes spatially dislodged identity practices, such as those mobilized over cell phones, computers, and online environments, but these are undertheorized (English-Lueck 2002). How do families and relational units sustain identity across time and space? In short, without an improved theoretical framework, family consumer researchers cannot understand how families engage in consumption activities to manage these identities, accommodate the ebb and flow of individual and relational units into and out of households, or explain the dynamic interplay of individual and relational identities that interact in space and time to account for the unfolding outcomes. A theory that highlights the interplay of individual, relational, and family identities and practices can shed light on all of these important issues with implications for analyzing other groups as well.

The purpose of our article is to introduce a framework of family identity enactment that highlights identity interplay. We define enactments as communicative performances, that is, rituals, narratives, everyday practices, and other forms in which families constitute and manage identity. This framework is intended as a sensitizing theory with a goal to "sensitize and orient researchers to certain critical processes," not a hypothetico-deductive theory with a goal of prediction (Turner 1986, 11). Baxter (2004) offers two criteria that scholars should use to judge a sensitizing theory: (1) its ability to be heuristic, enabling us to see relations in a new light, and (2) its ability to render intelligible a set of practices. We use this framework to learn how families use consumption to manage interplays among individual, relational, and collective identity enactments. To explicate this process, we first review literature across disciplines to define family identity. Second, we explain how families constitute identity in communication forms while drawing on symbolic marketplace resources. Third, we propose moderators of family identity enactment. Figure 1 illustrates relationships among these constructs and serves as the framework for the rest of the article.

In the article's final section, we discuss how this framework applies to several important areas of consumer research. In addition, throughout the article, our framework inspires numerous research questions that require empirical attention, as delineated in the text. Table A1 in the appendix outlines suggested methods and instruments for studying family identity in ways that account for overlapping identity bundles.

WHAT IS FAMILY IDENTITY?

References to family identity appear in marketing (Bates and Gentry 1994; Belk 1988; Curasi, Arnould, and Price 2004; Moisio, Arnould, and Price 2004), sociology (Bielby and Bielby 1989), communication studies (Braithwaite, Baxter, and Harper 1998; Galvin 2003; Koenig Kellas 2003), family studies (Blinn 1988; Fletcher 2002; Whiteside 1989;

Wolin and Bennett 1984), and psychology (Bolea 2000; Fiese et al. 2002). However, the construct has received little systematic definition and elaboration despite its consequential implications for consumer studies. In this section, we offer a definition to allow for consistent examination of family identity.

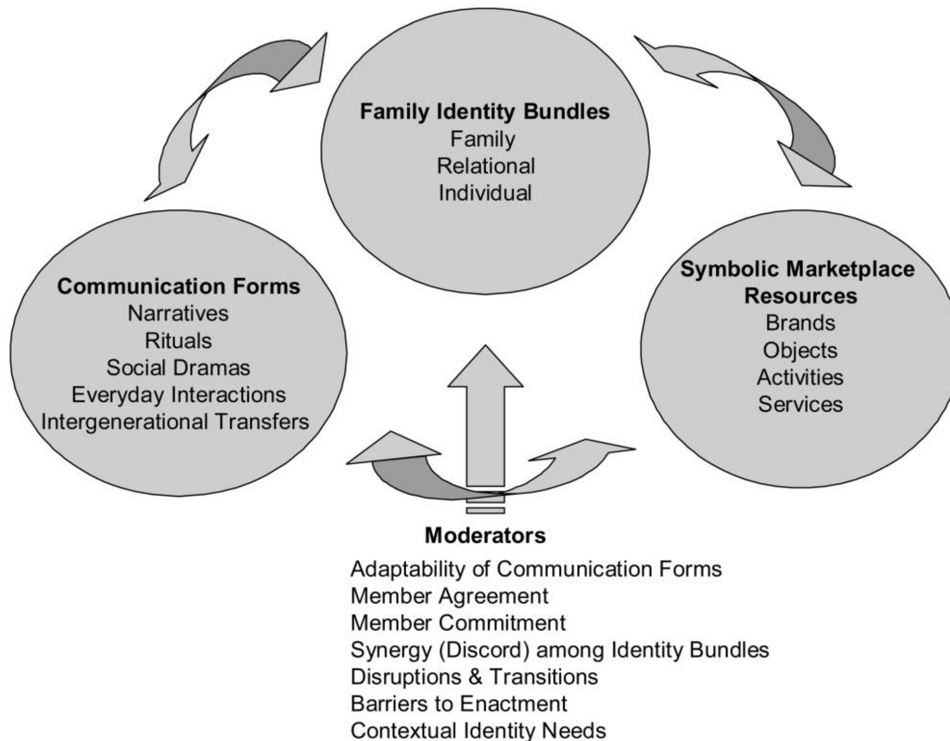
We adopt a view of family identity as mutually constructed, both internally among family members and externally in relation to the perceptions of outsiders based on observable family behavior (Reiss 1981). Further, families build their notions of collective identity in relation to a "familial gaze," referring to conventions or dominant ideologies of family that they inherit or see in media representations (Hirsch 1997, 11). Bennett, Wolin, and McAvity (1988) provide the most comprehensive explanation of family identity: "Family identity is the family's subjective sense of its own continuity over time, its present situation, and its character. It is the gestalt of qualities and attributes that make it a particular family and that differentiate it from other families" (212). In our framework, we emphasize that family identity is contingent upon shared interactions among relational bundles within the family that engage in both complementary and competing consumption practices. As such, we represent family identity not as a construct that resides in the minds of individuals but as co-constructed in action (Blumer 1969; Gergen 1996). This lens reframes our focal units of consumer analysis away from individual internal measures to highlight communicative practices, such as symbolic consumption activities, as constitutive of collective identity (Baxter 2004; Bennett et al. 1988; Carbaugh 1996; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Sandel 2002; Whitchurch and Dickson 1999; Wood 2000). Thus, a family's identity may diverge from the individual and relational identities of its members because the "we" discourses and practices that constitute these identities may be distinct.

Regardless of how varied families are in the actions used to define themselves, we can identify particular components shared across families. For instance, each makes decisions—again and again—about whom to include as members of their family, how the family is anchored in its past and preserved in a future, and what interactions define the character of the family. Addressing the character of the family is essential for distinguishing this collectivity as unique and special (Albert, Ashforth, and Dutton 2000). Next, we briefly outline three components of family identity: structure, generational orientation, and character.

Structure indicates "who is in and who is out, both now and in the past" (Bennett et al. 1988, 213). This component reflects not only the boundaries of family membership but also the hierarchy and roles of family members. Research suggests that structure is negotiated and instantiated through consumption activities among other activities. For instance, boundaries are reflected in Wallendorf and Arnould's (1991) theme of extensiveness of inclusion in Thanksgiving Day

FIGURE 1

FRAMEWORK OF IDENTITY INTERPLAY IN CONSUMPTION PRACTICES



family rituals, in which the family members included in the celebration vary from year to year. Similarly, Bates and Gentry (1994) give examples of family portraits taken following divorce that mark changes in boundaries of family membership.

The generational component describes links to past and future generations of family and depicts a reflective quality—that is "the extent to which a family understands its present condition as a part of a continuum over time," preserving identity from generation to generation (Bennett et al. 1988, 214). Limited consumer research emphasizes this component as valued among at least some contemporary North American households and linked to consumption patterns and possessions (Curasi, Arnould, and Price 2004; Moisio et al. 2004; Price, Arnould, and Curasi 2000). For instance, generations connect through such consumption rituals as viewing family photographs and storytelling that anchor a family to its past (Wallendorf and Arnould 1991), cherished possessions become families' inalienable wealth (Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004), and intergenerational influences are a source of brand equity (Moore et al. 2002).

Family character captures the day-to-day characteristics of family life (Bolea 2000). Within the context of consumption research, we propose that family character descriptors might be eclectic with families giving differential weight to shared activities (e.g., "We're a Green Bay Packers family"), shared traits (e.g., "We all laugh the same way"), similar temperaments (e.g., "We're all thrill-seekers"), common tastes (e.g., "We all love music"), or common values (e.g., "We're a patriotic family"). In particular, research links consumer values to consumption attitudes, behavior, and activities (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 1997; Kahle, Beatty, and Homer 1986; Richins and Dawson 1992) but does not address the complex enactment of family character that informs and directs consumption activities. Scholars studying collectivities agree that values are central to defining identity (Melewar 2003).

Relational identity can be similarly defined as the qualities and attributes that make it a particular subgroup and that differentiate it from other subgroups. Each of the three components applies to relational units as well. We characterize relational units by their structure, and subgroups may revise who belongs to their unique "we" in various contexts and time periods. Relational units within the family may differ with regard to generational orientation, with some subgroups incorporating past and future generations of family more readily than others. Finally, relational units may define themselves using different character descriptors than those used by other relational units or the family as a whole.

ENACTMENT: COMMUNICATION FORMS AND SYMBOLIC MARKETPLACE RESOURCES

Family life is made up of interacting communication forms and symbolic marketplace resources that shape and limit families' collective identities. Communication forms include the performance of family rituals, narratives, social dramas, everyday interactions, and intergenerational transfers. These communication forms draw on shared consumption symbols as resources for constructing and managing relational identities (Arnould and Price 2006; Arnould and Thompson 2005, 872; Barber 1995; Maffesoli 1996; Price 2006). Within this interplay, we suggest how families use marketplace resources to manage identity enactment processes (Ahuvia 2005; Murray 2002; Noble and Walker 1997; Oswald 1999; Schouten 1991; Thompson and Hirschman 1995; Thompson and Tambyah 1999; Tian and Belk 2005). An afternoon visit to Starbucks becomes a mother-daughter ritual that celebrates and socializes a shared identity—a good piano lesson, the finish for a "girls' day" of shopping. Mother's iPod provides individual respite from the collective enterprise of after school children at play. TiVo "saves marriages" by allowing couples to arrange and partition off shared everyday interactions. In these examples, brands and services are embedded in communication forms and inserted into family life to build and manage identity bundles.

The interplay of individuals, relational groupings, and families distinguishes whether and how consumption symbols are embedded in communication forms and identity enactments. Brands may be exclusive resources for a single relational grouping and communication form, or they may be embedded in a variety of communication forms and identity enactments. For example, Starbucks may play different symbolic roles in rituals, narratives, and everyday interactions with various identity bundles that make up the family. Prior research has established that shared consumption symbols serve multiple functions. Consumption symbols contain memories or feelings that link us to our sense of past (Belk 1991; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004), verify and authenticate important moments of personal history (Grayson and Shulman 2000), act as transitional objects (Belk 1992; Mehta and Belk 1991; Myers 1985; Noble and Walker 1997), express the material values of their owners (Richins 1994), define group membership (Belk 1988; Grubb and Grathwohl 1967), act as tie-signs that communicate relational identity (Goffman 1971), offer a means both to integrate and differentiate one from others (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988), and communicatively portray different aspects of identity (Kleine, Kleine, and Allen 1995). In contrast with most prior research, our framework highlights the simultaneity and fluidity of these multiple functions in the variety of identity enactments that make up family life.

Communication Forms

This section describes the communication forms that constitute, build, manage, and pass on collective identity: rituals, narratives, social dramas, intergenerational transfers, and everyday interactions (Bennett et al. 1988; Carbaugh 1996; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Whitchurch and Dickson 1999). These communication forms not only signal identity to family members but also serve as indicators of family identity to outsiders (Norrick 1997). Throughout this section we foreground the relationship of communication forms to family

identity but also illustrate how the concepts apply more broadly to the array of relational and individual identities constitutive of family. This review of communication forms establishes the theoretical foundations for our relational framework that jointly considers communication forms of identity enactment (and explains what we learn by doing so).

Rituals. As we examined research across disciplines, rituals surface as central to creating, revising, reinforcing, and passing on family identity (Baxter and Braithwaite 2002; Bennett et al. 1988; Bolea 2000; Bonsu and Belk 2003; Bossard and Boll 1950; Imber-Black, Roberts, and Whiting 1988; Wolin and Bennett 1984). Rituals delineate boundaries of the family, with invitation to and participation in family rituals serving as indicators of family membership (Otnes and Pleck 2003; Rook 1985; Wallendorf and Arnould 1991; Whiteside 1989). Families also maintain a sense of continuity of identity over time through ritual practices that mark their heritage (Bolea 2000; Bossard and Boll 1950; Cheal 1988; Curasi, Arnould, and Price 2004; Fiese et al. 2002; Moisio et al. 2004; Rosenthal and Marshall 1988). Studies of remarried families highlight using ritual performances to manage tensions that emerge from shifting conceptions of family identity (Braithwaite et al. 1998; Whiteside 1989). The interplay of ritual practices among identity bundles making up a family has received relatively little research attention but could inform our understanding of family consumption. For example, one family may express shock at the ritual use of a "children's table" at Thanksgiving because of how it partitions family membership, while another family may view it as important for children to establish and share in their own rituals. Thus, in a variety of consumption contexts, families may systematically vary in which identity enactments are privileged, further driving how they draw upon marketplace resources.

Narratives. We understand and build our individual, relational, and family identities through the communicative construction of narratives (Bennett et al. 1988; Bochner, Ellis, and Tillmann-Healy 2000; Bolea 2000; Langellier and Peterson 1993; Sillars 1995; Stone 1988). Recent work explores consumer narrative content and structure to understand how consumers make sense of their experiences with brands and products and construct a coherent life story (Ahuvia 2005; Escalas and Bettman 2000; Kleine et al. 1995). The narratives we create, discover, and apply help us deal with the inherent contradictions we encounter in social life (Bochner 2002) and provide continuity during times of transition (Bochner 2002; Linde 1993; Ochs 1997). Consumer research offers links among narratives, consumption, and identity projects of both individuals (Ahuvia 2005; Escalas and Bettman 2000; Thompson 1996, 1997; Thompson and Tambyah 1999) and collectivities (Arnould and Price 1993; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Kozinets et al. 2004; Thompson and Arsel 2004) but rarely explores the interplay of individual, relational, and collective narratives.

Our framework suggests that family members will expose the interplay among individual, relational, and family identities in jointly narrated, sometimes contested, and continuously revised consumption stories. Family stories are never complete—"We are always in conversation with them" (Stone 1988, 8). The introductory vignette highlights an individual narrative about identity interplay, but we could further uncover whether and how this narrative is jointly constructed by adding the stories of other identity bundles in the family. For example, what jointly constructed story about the upcoming Disneyland vacation would the stepfather and mother tell? These shifting accounts influence both the meanings and functions of objects related to a family's identity. To investigate these interplays, researchers could analyze not only consumers' jointly told family stories but also their "imagetexts"—the verbal overlays that disclose the storied composition of visual images (Hirsch 1997), such as family photo albums and websites.

Social Dramas. Social dramas are a nearly universal processual form and occur at every level of social structure from small groups to complex nations (Turner 1980). Defined broadly as a public response to norm violations, social dramas motivate discourse and redressive action, offering a context for identities to arise and change based upon how one responds to a disruption (Carbaugh 1996; Turner 1980). Social dramas occur at the interface between an individual or group and a wider system of social relations. For example, within the context of family identity, teenagers might challenge family norms while visiting extended family or in a nonfamilial social group such as a church, retail outlet, neighborhood, or school.

Despite relatively little attention in consumer research (Chatzidakis et al. 2004), consumption-based social dramas may be quite common and consequential for the identity bundles that make up the family. Most of us probably can recall numerous consumption-based social dramas played out between generations within our own families over skirt length, hair length, musical tastes, and car access. New product introductions and technologies such as cell phones, portable game systems, and the Internet require families to generate norms to govern their use. These norms create family boundaries within larger groups and enforce and maintain these boundaries. For example, family members can readily form disputed representations or reveal closely held family secrets through easy access to online forums, and the corrective actions that describe a social drama reaffirm a group's shared standards and identity (Carbaugh 1996). Our relational framework directs us to consider how families manage tensions among identity bundles in their social dramatic responses to norm violations surrounding consumption.

Intergenerational Transfers. Intergenerational influences and transfers of various objects, possessions, and practices signal the nature of certain family relationships and shape family and individual identity (Bolea 2000; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Moore et al. 2002; Moore and Wilkie 2005; Moore-Shay and Lutz 1988). Researchers have studied the development of intergenerational influence as a function of the structure and environment of family life

(Moore, Wilkie, and Alder 2001), attempted to tease out the relative influence of parents and siblings (Cotte and Wood 2004), and studied the strength of family relationships as a predictor of intergenerational transfer (Shah and Mittal 1997; Webster and Wright 1999). Prior research suggests that intergenerational brand influence is supported by, among other things, memories of home or family, a shared identity, and rituals (Moore et al. 2002). Such findings imply that we might better understand intergenerational influence processes by examining how particular brands are embedded in family and relational identity enactments. Our framework provides an understanding of intergenerational influences that likely depend on the presence of observable, consistent, and meaningful forms and symbols of enactment.

Everyday Interaction. Families accomplish much of the management of everyday interaction through various routines and communicative acts unique to each family (Whitchurch and Dickson 1999; Wood 2000). Baxter (2004) speaks to the importance of everyday family interaction in providing a basis for relational identity in her description of *chronotopic similarity*: "the stockpile of shared time-space experiences that a pair constructs through their joint interaction events over time . . . accomplished in mundane communication events" (4). Examples of everyday interaction might include talking at the dinner table, playing games together, going grocery shopping, cleaning the home, or watching movies as a family.

Consumer researchers recognize that everyday, mundane consumption is self-relevant, but they rarely highlight everyday interaction, so we have much to learn about how these behaviors relate to identity (Coupland 2005; Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1992; Miller 1998). Empirical research suggests that the nature and frequency of everyday family interactions are consequential for self, relational, and family identity (Cole et al. 1982; Davey and Paolucci 1980; Leigh 1982; McAllister, Butler, and Lei 1973; Reiss 1962; Scott 1962). For example, frequent interaction with family as well as friends provides the most fertile conditions for adolescent growth, counterbalancing each other in positive and socially healthy ways (Larson 1983). Mundane interactions among family members are integrated with consumption objects and activities. In some cases consumption objects and activities are central props or even crutches for engaging in family interaction, while at other times consumption objects and activities play a minor role. We need to understand more about the participatory roles of consumption objects and activities in family identity enactments. For example, there is much rhetoric about the impact of television on family interaction but surprisingly little attention paid to relational dynamics that reveal how television can enable new kinds of dialogues and uncover latent family identity impulses. For example, a family may discover their collective sense of humor through exchanges related to a show like *American Idol* or may use television to fill silent spaces in uncomfortable but important conversations between, for example, a father and daughter. As such, researchers should pay close attention to how consumption is embedded in the everyday interaction of family members in an attempt to understand how family identity is altered and consolidated through interaction.

Relationships Exposed through Interplay among Communication Forms

As the lived experiences of families more frequently reflect these as overlapping and mutually reinforcing forms of enactment, in this section we explore how these forms relate to one another to jointly constitute family identities. As we consider these communication forms jointly, research questions emerge that delineate relationships among different forms of enactment and family identity. First, how, if at all, do communication forms vary in terms of their functions (i.e., provide continuity, establish family patterns) related to family identity? For instance, everyday interactions surrounding possession and consumption activities may serve as indicators of appropriate behavior, whereas narratives and rituals associated with possessions and consumption may provide continuity of identity over the life course of the family.

Second, to what extent is a sense of a collective identity dependent on varied and mutually reinforcing forms of family enactment? By shifting the lens to a relational view of families, we expose how families enact an array of forms to constitute both collective and relational identities. This highlights the seepage among and between communication forms and also the priority of various communication forms within family life. To illustrate the potential seepage among various communication forms, consider a family that defines itself as adventurous. This family may go skydiving together as part of an annual ritual, repeatedly tell stories about their adventures, and pass from generation to generation the pin used to open their great-grandfather's parachute on his first jump. This family identity may or may not extend to other identity bundles within the family—mom and youngest sister may go along for family adventures, but when together the two may opt for a quiet day collecting seashells at the beach. In this family, various communication forms are integrated in family enactments of adventure. However, other families may prioritize one or a few communication forms. Families cannot escape enacting family, but they do vary in how explicitly and intentionally this is accomplished. Families may implicitly enact family through parallel sociality that involves few shared narratives or rituals (Daly 1996). These implicit enactments of family may be reflected as shared traits or common values (We all love to read, but we do this independently). Examining communication forms jointly and across identity bundles reveals whether and how they work together to inform the family's identity.

Third, how, if at all, do families vary in their performances of some forms over others? What is the relative substitutability of one communication form for another? Can display of objects or narratives about consumption stand in for ritual enactment or everyday interactions? For example, much research documents various beneficial effects of family dinnertime, including that teens and children who have regular

family mealtimes are more emotionally content, perform better in school, and have better peer relationships, healthier eating habits, and less likelihood of engaging in a variety of negative consumption behaviors (Hofferth and Sandberg 2001; Thomas-Lepore et al. 2004), but why? Researchers point to family dinnertime as a crucial vehicle for the exchange of family narratives, a purposive commitment to the kinship network, and a routine ritual that creates and reinforces a family's sense of who they are. But could families do something else together with similar effect? Could they have a family game night, take a family car trip, or go on an evening walk? What are our taken-for-granted notions about consumption rituals for enacting family?

Similarly, the question of relative substitutability can inform research on the intergenerational transfer of family identity. Families do not transfer consumption patterns and objects across generations to the same extent. Are consumption activities embedded in family ritual enactment versus those associated with everyday interaction more likely to replicate across generations? Some research appears to support this claim. For example, Wolin et al. (1980) investigate the intergenerational transmission of alcoholism and find that, in transmitter families, alcoholism is inextricably embedded in the meaning and performance of rituals, whereas in nontransmitter families, alcoholism is kept distinct from ritual enactment. Can family stories without ritual use preserve objects for the next generation? Research linking the use of special objects in family consumption rituals with their intergenerational transfer implies that family narratives may substitute for rituals to preserve objects in the family over time but everyday interactions may not distinguish an object as worthy for transmission (Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004). Thus, what are the minimal conditions for the transfer of consumption patterns or objects? At best, the literature tangentially advocates that family members' commitment to rituals and narratives plays a role in the social reproduction of family identity (Bennett et al. 1988).

MODERATORS OF FAMILY IDENTITY PRACTICES

Thus far, we have focused our attention on how families enact and constitute their collective identities in various communication forms and using consumer activities as symbolic resources. In this section of the article, we extend our framework by proposing moderators of family identity enactment.

We introduce seven factors that moderate how families constitute and manage identity: (1) level of adaptability of communication forms and symbols, (2) extent to which a family demonstrates a shared sense of collective identity (member agreement), (3) level of commitment one or more family members exhibit to maintaining a particular shared identity practice, (4) whether and how shared identities are synergistic with the individual and relational identities of family members, (5) disruptions to identity practices, (6) barriers to identity enactment, and (7) varied and contextual identity needs of the family.

Adaptability of Forms and Symbols

As communication forms and consumption symbols are open to reinterpretation, families adapt these over time based on the needs of the family. We examined research across disciplines and found that families differ in the extent to which they adapt, displaying different levels of attachment to identity-constituting practices such as family narratives and rituals. For example, families may be rigid, egalitarian, or flexible in their attitude toward ritual (Bennett et al. 1988). In order for rituals to survive across generations, families must adapt performances to serve the identity needs of the family while they retain the symbolic meaning of the ritual (Bennett et al. 1988; Bossard and Boll 1950; Braithwaite et al. 1998; Cheal 1988; Roberts 1988; Wolin and Bennett 1984). For example, a flexible family might alter who is in charge of the pies, where the family gathers, who is invited, and even when Thanksgiving is celebrated to reflect the changing interests and constraints of individual members. Nevertheless, core forms and symbols that distinguish the family's enactment of Thanksgiving could remain stable.

Although the intergenerational literature in consumer research observes adaptability, it has not addressed differences among families with regard to ability or willingness to adapt nor has it linked this adaptability to the likelihood of keeping objects, brand loyalties, or other preferences in the family. For example, consumers creatively adapt rituals and combine elements of existing and new ritual practices within the context of inheritance (Curasi, Arnould, and Price 2004), but what characteristics differentiate families who are flexible from families who are more rigid in these practices? How do differences in adaptability influence how families enact their identities?

Another puzzling concern emerges as we consider how families interact with the marketplace in their attempts to perform family. Contemporary families can access an array of products and services that substitute for family production and claim time savings (Daly 1996). We know that families vary in adaptability, but under what conditions can families outsource part or all of a family activity without disrupting a practice to the extent that it no longer constitutes identity? One of the most difficult issues to navigate is the very real problem of childcare (Hochschild 2001). For example, how many evenings can the babysitter do the bedtime ritual before the family no longer considers it a mother/daughter identity practice? How much infusion of technology in the home will families accept before crucial, central identity practices are completely eliminated?

Member Agreement

Although collective enactments certainly shape individual members' articulations about the collectivity, family members may differ in their descriptions of what constitutes the family's collective identity and whether and how that collective identity is linked to consumption symbols and activities. How do individual family members describe their family to others? To what extent do these descriptions match

those of other family members? We contend that the level of agreement among family members will influence family identity enactment. According to Stone (1988, 34), "Usually this familial identity is not articulated or often said out loud, although the fact is that just about any given family member will, if questioned, define what it means to be a member of the family in ways that are at least roughly consistent with what other family members would say." This suggests that individual family members should both share and be able to articulate similar descriptions of the family's identity. However, we would expect variation across families in the degree of agreement among family members about collective and relational identities. For instance, Bagozzi (2000) describes agreement in conceptions of collective-level constructs. He distinguishes between group intentions and individual intentions directed toward group action. He posits that individuals can have "we-intentions" that are not shared by the other parties involved. Families also may contend with differing we-intentions. Families with children interested in music, for instance, may propose buying annual passes to the local symphony, but the image of a "musical family" may be alien to some family members. How does member (dis)agreement about collective identity influence the pattern of consumption activities used to enact family? For instance, a family with low member agreement might alternate between family representations in selecting consumption activities or restrict collective enactment to a minimal set of agreed-upon representations.

Further, for a family's collective identity, we might hypothesize that the meaning of a shared symbolic object or activity should be relatively similar across family members. However, symbolic objects can be imbued with a variety of meanings that coexist and shift over time (Belk and Costa 1998; Miller 1987). Thus, different family members could view the same objects or activities as symbolic of their collective identity, while they incorporate a diversity of meanings to them. For example, family members may agree that camping defines their family, while they hold different perceptions of the details of family camping. The parents might envision a 5-mile hike that ends in cooking freeze-dried food over a small kerosene burner, while the children imagine hooking up a recreational vehicle and watching a movie.

Commitment to Identity Practices

Family members also may vary in their commitment to maintaining certain enactments of family identity. Commitment of individual members to family enactments depends both on personal meanings and scripted, rule-like social behaviors (Bielby 1992). That is, individual members may commit to family enactments more or less consciously. Scripted, habitual forms of family enactment may require little conscious orchestration, while more elective family enactments must be championed and managed. For example, the intention to "do something fun together over the weekend as a family" may give way to inertia and individual pursuits, but "date night" for the parents and Sunday dinner with grandparents may remain unquestioned rituals. What we do not know is whether and how the commitment of one family member to a particular collective enactment can compensate for the lack of commitment of other family members. Research supports that kin-keeping activities occur at least informally in many or most families. Often someone in the family serves as kin-keeper, charged with keeping family members in touch with each other (Rosenthal 1985). Do kin-keepers compensate for other family members' lack of commitment? Kin-keepers may be especially important to endurance of forms and symbols of family identity enactment (Curasi, Arnould, and Price 2004), but we know little about how this role varies across families, communication forms, and consumption activities.

Synergy and Discord among Individual, Relational, and Familial Identities

Another moderator of family identity enactment is the compatibility of individual family members' identities with collective performances of family identity (or with each member's enactments, activities, and discourses related to identity). As different interactions of the collectivity often do not include all members of the family, smaller collectivities develop relational identities based on their own history of shared experiences. Here we are interested in how enactments of individual and relational identities within the family correspond with and depart from enactments of collective identities. Our intention is not to suggest that family, relational, and individual identities will ever be in balance. Rather, tensions among these diverse identities are constantly in flux, and family members and collectivities may employ consumption activities to construct, differentiate, or reform these identities. Imagine the merging of enactments when a blended family is formed. Stepsons who were not previously interested in sports may become fanatics about baseball to establish a relational identity with their stepfather. This activity gives the stepson and the stepfather a common language and new shared interaction that reframes who they are as a collectivity.

Although previously outlined research suggests that family identities shape individual identities, research also suggests that individual family members embrace or reject certain aspects of their family identities (Bennett et al. 1988; Stone 1988). Synergy among individual, relational, and family identities may lead to a variety of outcomes related to family identity enactment. Several research questions merit empirical attention. For instance, how will tensions or synergies among individual, relational, and family identities get constituted in consumers' selection of activities? For instance, an examination of synergy among identity bundles might reveal that families whose identity bundles almost completely overlap will enact identity in much the same way whether individually, in small groups, or as a collective. This leads us to further ask, are consumption objects that have a symbolic (and/or) indexical relationship, that is, a "real, factual and special association" (Grayson and Shulman 2000, 19) to multiple relational identities, more likely to be viewed as irreplaceable or inalienable? For example,

if the basement pool table is central in family reunions but is also important in enactments of brothers, father-sons, father-daughters, and couple time, is it more likely to be viewed as irreplaceable as compared to a dining room table that is used only for family ritual gatherings? Alternatively, this linking to multiple relational identity enactments may diffuse meaning and make it less irreplaceable.

Similarly, an examination of discord among identity bundles would clarify under what conditions families highlight collective identity over relational or individual identity. Sometimes individuals and relational bundles such as parents or siblings compromise to favor collective identity and at other times express an oppositional identity, but we do not know the constitutive processes that determine these responses. Further, consumer researchers and service providers need to understand when one relational identity (father-daughter) takes precedence over another (couple). If little synergy exists among identities, we might see constraints in our choices for enacting family. For example, if family members believe in the importance of family dinners, but the younger children do not like to go out to eat, and the father, reflecting norms from his family of origin, believes the family should not eat processed foods, the family's choices for how to carry out that collective enactment are constricted. What happens when different family members or collectivities demonstrate commitment to competing identity enactments or symbols? In this case, some family members may feel that they are primarily recipients of a designed and produced family enactment, such as a family-generated expectation to participate in sports, that is at odds with other relational identity enactments, such as after-school sibling play. Finally, how does synergy and discord among individual, relational, and family identities influence public versus private consumption practices? For example, Tian and Belk (2005) illustrate that employees negotiate the home-work boundary by deciding what aspects of their individual identity to display in the workplace, but this could be extended to include decisions about the display of family and relational identities in different consumption contexts. Discarded and disputed family enactments (such as family photos following a divorce) might be publicly highlighted in certain relational spaces and viewed as profane in other relational spaces or alternatively family members might publicly project only agreed-upon family identities.

Disruptions to Identity Practices

Families experience various potentially transformative events over time. Some of these identity disruptions are those that we invite or anticipate, such as marriage, the birth of a child, or the purchase of a new home, whereas others are less predictable and/or less welcome, such as divorce, serious illness, loss of employment, and debilitating accidents. These disruptions moderate how a family enacts its identity and highlight new roles for marketplace resources.

Following Cowan (1991, 14), "the story of cumulative transitions in our views of ourselves becomes a narrative of our own personal, familial, or cultural history." The trials families endure and the ways in which families respond to changes to ensure family survival become a key part of that family's identity (Bolea 2000). Unplanned critical events represent important interfaces between phases and provide remarkable turning points that stimulate immediate changes in family identity. For example, imagine the interplay among a medical crisis, collective identity, and marketplace resources. A medical crisis may threaten enactment of a central collective practice, such as the ability and the energy to prepare meals following chemotherapy. The family has to decide about a collective response. Will they shift who they are as a family? Will they enlist marketplace or other resources (such as hiring a personal chef, purchasing premade meals, or using meal-assembly services) to maintain this central collective practice?

Consumer research notes that individual identity is challenged during transitions (Noble and Walker 1997; Schouten 1991) and that transitions lead to disruptions in consumption (Andreasen 1984; Fellerman and Debevee 1993). In addition, family identity is especially salient during transitions, when identity is challenged, redefined, and/or reorganized (Bolea 2000). A few consumer studies connect identity challenges families face during transitions to consumption-related behavior. For example, consumer researchers have investigated the transition to motherhood (Carrigan and Szmigin 2004; Fischer and Gainer 1993; Jennings and O'Malley 2003) and empty nesting (Hogg, Maclaran, and Curasi 2003; Olsen 1999), although research on the role of consumption in marking and enabling transitions is exploratory and minimal. Some research has also explored the use of consumption as coping mechanisms for family disruption and stress. Research on separation and divorce suggests that consumption is used to restore or build a sense of family identity (Bates and Gentry 1994; Burroughs and Rindfleisch 1997; Rindfleisch, Burroughs, and Denton 1997). For instance, Bates and Gentry (1994) illustrate families eating together, having a portrait taken, going on a trip or vacation, and generally spending time together to build a new family identity. As illustrated in our opening vignette, our framework extends this research by highlighting the interplay of identity bundles in these family transitions. Correspondingly, a recent promotional campaign illustrates the use of Cheerios to integrate an adopted child into a family ("Adoption Commercial" 2006).

The research outlined above suggests that transitions challenge relational and family identity. This has implications for the consumption-related behaviors families will engage in to restore, maintain, or reconstruct a sense of family. We learn our theories of self through a history of interaction with others that leads to a range of possible selves (Littlejohn 1999). To illustrate, families with a greater breadth of experience may be more multidimensional with regard to the amalgam of possible collective selves. Further, these families have access to a more diverse set of resources (including ideas, values, symbols, meanings, and stories) and practices (including behaviors, actions, and forms of expression; Littlejohn 1999). We can support this view with Langellier and

Peterson's (2004) suggestion: "A diverse family system [meaning it includes a younger generation that brings new information and difference to the family] has more resources and adapts more readily to environmental changes" (98). Conversely, it seems reasonable that this same diversity may serve as a source of tension within a family with regard to which characteristics should be included in the collective identity. Given these competing views, does access to a broader set of communication forms and symbols facilitate or inhibit families' ability to adapt collective enactments following a disruption?

Barriers to Enactment

Families encounter countless barriers to identity enactment. We focus on barriers related to a lack of access to resources, setting aside those related to social barriers. The marketplace both enables and constrains the types of identity construction practices available to families.

We have identified at least three resource barriers to family identity enactment. First, geographic dispersion of family members may prevent some forms of family identity enactment or require modification of existing forms. For instance, technologies can play an important role in re-creating altered rituals and everyday interactions across geographically dispersed family members, such as having breakfast together using Webcam-based software (e.g., Skype) or doing parent-child visitations online at a virtual playground such as Disney's Toontown.

Second, time constraints also present barriers to family identity enactment. Time-poor families often find it challenging to manage the competing demands of daily life. For these families, family identity enactments may become embedded more concretely in other activities. An example might be that family narratives emerge in the car on the way to band practice rather than around the dinner table. Further, the family's daily activities may take on the primary form of enactment. For example, after children become involved in sports, the family may become a soccer family and, in doing so, abandon or limit its enactments of public service for the community or neighborhood. In this way, enactments are continually shifting to meet the changing needs of the family over time, as conceptions and boundaries of family change.

A third barrier to enactment might be a lack of monetary resources to enact family identities in the forms they desire. Prior research has observed that differential access to material objects available through resources has an impact on individual identity within a group and a group's manipulation and access to material objects are crucial to relations of hierarchy and power within the group (Miller 1987). We can envision how access to marketplace and other resources within the family and in one family as compared to others will shape the collective identity of the family.

In addition, changes in access to resources may force redefinition of family identity and alter the focus of family identity enactment. An obvious example would be a change in financial or time resources that prevents central family enactments, such as going on vacation. A few important questions emerge from this line of inquiry, such as how do changes in barriers to enactment affect a family's identity? In what ways do these changes alter the ways they enact identity? What consumption-oriented strategies do families use to overcome these barriers?

Identity Needs of the Family

The final variable that we contend moderates how families enact identity relates to the identity needs of the family. As families are embedded in cultures and in contexts, shifts in cultural conceptions of family (such as those portrayed in the media or related to the familial gaze) and more local changes to their environments may stimulate changes in the identity needs of the family. For instance, families are constantly being pulled apart by the circumstances of daily life, creating a need in some families to maintain or reassert collective identity. As previous research indicates, there is a continuous tension among the growth experiences of individual members, relational groupings, and families as they interact with their surroundings and try to integrate accommodations for these changes into existing enactments (e.g., Valentine 1999). Although most of the literature has examined this tension from the perspective of individual identity, a more adequate theory would detail these tensions at the individual, relational, group, and even societal level (Stryker and Macke 1978). Depending upon the context, families may strive to reconstruct or change their identities, maintain or reinforce a current conception of identity, or generate a different response.

We hypothesize that the family's adaptability, member (dis)agreement, synergy/discord, commitment, and the type and extent of barriers they face are linked to both the identity needs of the family and the resulting enactments. However, this assertion raises many additional questions. For instance, under what conditions are families willing to adapt the meanings and uses of ritual artifacts as the identity needs of the family change? In addition, how does member agreement about family identity influence whether a family reconstructs or maintains its identity in response to a disruption? Specifically, if family members disagree on who they are as a family, how do members negotiate or manage conceptions of identity following a challenge to it?

Summary. In this section, we examined moderators of family identity enactment through consumption activities. First, we suggested that families' variability in their level of adaptability of communication forms and symbols would moderate how families use consumption to enact identity. Second, we outlined how factors related to the interplay among individual, relational, and family identities, such as family member agreement about collective identities, commitment to maintaining particular enactments, and the extent that shared identities are synergistic with individual and relational identity performances, alter enactments. Third, we proposed that disruptions challenge a family's collective identities and that families vary in their use of market resources to respond to those disruptions. Fourth, we discussed how

initial and ongoing barriers to enactment modify family identity discourses. Fifth, we addressed the contextual responses to fluid individual, relational, and family identity needs. Finally, we offered research questions that propose links among the various components outlined in this section to delineate the relationships among individual, relational, and family identity in the consumption domain. Table A1 in the appendix offers approaches for studying these constructs.

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND APPLICATIONS

Our framework alters how we study the goals of consumer action and changes relevant units of analysis for consumer behavior. In contrast to research on individual goals situated socially, we highlight co-constructed relational goals, such as accessing and activating spaces and technologies to shape and stage family experiences. Further, our research alters the primary unit of analysis, moving from the individual or household to the interplay of identity bundles in action. In this sense, households, products, technologies, and brands are nested within relational bundles. Table A2 of the appendix summarizes potential contributions family identity studies could make to consumer research. To demonstrate, we conclude by offering three theoretical applications: family decision making, consumer socialization, and person-object relations.

Family Decision Making

Family decision making has examined decision roles, relative influence, influence strategies, and decision stages (Commuri and Gentry 2000). This research has been broadly criticized as lacking a process orientation and as not focusing on interaction and dynamics (Qualls 1988). However, even in the limited research that adopts a process orientation, there is an overemphasis on individual influence strategies and accommodative and conflict resolution strategies without regard for relational unit goals (Corfman and Lehmann 1987; Su, Fern, and Ye 2003). Our sensitizing framework suggests that, when families make decisions, they draw on bundles of identities that include the identities of individuals, dyads, smaller collectivities, and the family as a whole. Consumer researchers have not attended to this multiplicity of collectivities, and this perspective offers a reformulation of the way we think about decision making. Studies of family decision making have examined either general family characteristics (John 1999) or specific dyadic units (Commuri and Gentry 2000, 2005), without examining the various relational units within and including the family as we suggest should be done. Using our theoretical framework, researchers studying family decision making would begin by examining the interplay of reciprocal bundles of identities within the family.

Although families do make decisions that accommodate individual and other relational unit identities, certain decisions are bounded by their centrality to family identity enactment and are less subject to who wins and loses and myriad conflict-resolution processes. Some categories of decisions made within a family are better construed as co-constituted enactments of family identity than as negotiated joint decisions. For example, the oft-articulated purpose of family vacations is to stage a collective experience that serves the goals of performing family (DeVault 2000). To analyze this in terms of relative influence completely misses that the choice turns around the intention to constitute the group as a family. Our framework suggests a whole different set of variables for examination. For example, we would want to know whether and how a collective vacation decision is synergistic with individual and relational identities of family members, the extent to which a family has a shared vision of what kinds of vacations enact family, and the range of substitutable vacation options that would serve family identity needs. In addition, we would want to look at the varied and contextual identity needs of the family in assessing how prominently producing or reinforcing family identity will figure into the choice. For example, families may use vacations to strengthen particular relational units within the family, such as father-son relations or child-grandparent relations.

Another limitation of family decision making research is that it tends to focus on household decision making rather than the ebb and flow of family relational units into and out of the household (DeVault 2003) that create relational identity needs. The very idea of family topples out of households—family is not constrained by that structure. For example, blended and divorced families enact family identity outside of the parameters of a household, sometimes vacationing together, connecting through technologies, and constructing novel rituals. In addition, many family identity rituals are constructed around and derive their meaning from the ebbs and flows of family in and out of social spaces. For instance, social dramas get highlighted as a tool for enforcing the boundary between family and public, collective narratives knit family members dispersed in space and time into a cohesive identity, and everyday interactions also bring this coming together and moving apart to the forefront. Because, in traditional family decision making research, household and family are often equated, a narrow definition of family is imposed that is consistent with traditional family life cycle models but inconsistent with the relational bundles that characterize contemporary family life. Also, because these are equated, we have not considered the household as a particular consequential structure around which families ebb and flow. Families use a household in the same way that they might use other marketplace resources (e.g., telephone, computer, dining room table, or RV) as a tool for co-constituting collective experiences. In some families, households may be very important, whereas in other families collective experiences mostly may be constructed outside the household. Future family decision making research should examine the coming together and pulling apart of families within and beyond household boundaries, concentrating on actions that produce family rather than on consumption decisions devoid of relational goals.

Consumer Socialization

Although consumer socialization is a central process in family studies (Carlson and Grossbart 1988; John 1999; Moschis 1985, 1987), an exceptional and comprehensive review of consumer socialization of children points to several general problems with this body of work (John 1999). John (1999) contends that we cannot explain socialization of children by studying either the intentional educational strategies of parents or general family communication patterns, the two most common themes of study. Instead, family socialization influences are thought to proceed more subtly, during social interaction among family members. However, the challenge is how to study these subtle social interactions. One approach is desegregation of family influence into analysis of communication patterns with specific dyads (father-son) as a potential corrective (John 1999). Our framework offers a different solution that examines how these socialization processes are nested within communication forms and symbols of family identity enactment.

Families' identities influence the content and process of socialization, and in turn socialization processes are vital in developing and reinforcing families' identities (Galvin 2003). Narratives, rituals, social dramas, everyday interactions, and intergenerational transfers become sites for uncovering consumer socialization processes. We speculate that family influence is salient in consumption practices that are central to family identity. Thus, if we wanted to study family socialization using this framework, we would begin by identifying these central practices to determine domains of influence. Next, we would examine how moderators of family identity enactment affect these domains. For instance, suppose that we determined that television is central to our family identity; then we would further explore how it figures into various communication practices among relational units that generate norms about how members of our family should interact with television. The socialization of practices will vary from macro norms—such as how much and what kinds of television our family watches and how we share that experience together—to more idiosyncratic rituals, such as what happens during commercials. We might further explore how various individual, relational, and collective identities moderate socialization of central family practices. For example, family members may gravitate toward father-daughter commitments to television as a central family practice, thus strengthening socialization effects related to this relational unit that may reinforce (or diverge) from macro family norms.

Object Relations

Although consumer research offers important insights into the categories, functions, and meanings of special objects, many areas remain unaddressed. We contend that adopting a relational lens of family identity changes what we understand about special possessions and how they are linked to consumption. Many scholars address a particular transitional or liminal period in which identity is challenged and point to objects as symbolic anchors to a preliminal self and markers of a postliminal self (Belk 1992; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Lastovicka and Fernandez 2005; Mehta and Belk 1991; Noble and Walker 1997). In addition, researchers have explored how the meanings, functions, and types of object attachments differ by age group and/or life stage (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton 1981; Gentry, Baker, and Kraft 1995; Kamptner 1989). Although these former studies tell us much about the role of transitional objects as representative of identity states at particular points in time and about what objects are important to families or individuals at different stages, this does not uncover the dynamic interplay of the biography of objects with the identity practices of families over time—for instance, how a particular object interacts with family identity bundles over time.

By adopting a process-oriented view, we can examine how objects move in and out of salience as families reorganize their identities over time. Boundaries around relational units are fluid to reflect the dynamics of family life, and the symbolic status or meaning of an object changes with shifting enactments of family and relational identities over time. To illustrate this point, we draw on Kopytoff's (1986) contention that objects have cultural biographies—that is, objects accumulate histories from the social interactions they are caught up in. From this perspective, one can understand the biography or life of an object by tracing its origin, history, the turning points it marks, and its uses. Kleine et al. (1995) suggest that object attachments are communicative in a way that helps narrate a person's life story. Based on these ideas, we argue that, by tracing the biography of an object and linking it to the biography of a family, we see, unlike previous research that highlights the attachment to different objects across the life span (Myers 1985; Wallendorf and Arnould 1988), that families can employ the same object to construct identity at multiple phases of the development process.

Over time, families reconstitute the meanings and uses of an object in light of their present circumstances. It is not necessarily the case that meanings remain relatively stable and that the objects employed in identity projects change, as others have argued (Wallendorf and Arnould 1988), but rather, at any one point in time, we find that some objects are active in processes of family identity enactment and others are inactive, at least for the time being. If we follow the biography of a single object across time, it moves in and out of involvement in family identity enactment processes. Consider a mundane object such as a rocking chair. The chair may begin life as a cozy reading space in a college apartment, symbolic of individual independence and aesthetics. Later it may become an important partner in a young couple's entertaining space, allowing them to house one more person in their small living room. The chair may be relegated to the attic as the young couple decorates their first home with a new living room set. As the family changes, the chair may be reintroduced as a platform for the evolving relationship between a mother and her newborn daughter, then become a time-out chair for the youngest, next be the

place grandmother sits when she reads the children stories, and finally be moved to the oldest daughter's bedroom as a reading space away from where the family watches TV. As a result, the centrality of the object to family identity practices fluctuates over time and the meanings of it shift with varied forms of interaction.

The communication forms outlined in our framework enable objects to carry the identity markers of a family lineage through time. For instance, the preservation of the "social life" of the object is dependent on how, when, and to whom its stories are told. As objects are passed through time and often survive long after any one person, the stories (or versions of the stories) are passed with them. Kopytoff (1986) does not actually discuss this communicative phenomenon, but the work of Curasi, Price, and Arnould (2004) reveals the importance of meanings bundled with the objects and passed across generations through family stories. These forms also highlight the moments in time that families employ special objects in the enactment process.

Another contribution our framework of identity interplay makes to the special objects literature relates to identity bundles and their links to consumption. Although consumer researchers have examined the relations between individual identity and special possessions (Grayson and Shulman 2000; Hill 1991; Kleine et al. 1995; Myers 1985; Noble and Walker 1997; Richins 1994) and between collective identity and special possessions (Belk 1992; Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004; Mehta and Belk 1991), our framework highlights the "between space" and relations among identities. As we pointed to in earlier discussions, under some circumstances, individual or relational identity enactments are not consistent with the collective family identity (Stone 1988). This creates tensions among various bundles of identity.

Consider Kleine et al.'s (1995) discussion of how life stories reflect tensions of affiliation-autonomy in identity. These authors contend that the affiliation-autonomy dialectic partially explains the types of attachments we develop toward objects. They recognize both an autonomous self and a self as connected to others, including how one's relationships with others influence our view of self and attachment to special objects. However, they do not speak to a sense of collective identity or group attachment to objects. We consider that smaller collectivities within the family develop certain attachments to special objects, while other collectivities or individuals within the family develop different attachments. This perspective exposes conditions under which the meanings of and attachments to special objects are negotiated, contested, or congruent with various identity projects within the family. In families, special objects both create tensions and are put to work to manage those tensions. Within the context of family identity enactment, we see interactions among objects rather than objects in isolation, as they have previously been studied (Grayson and Shulman 2000; Kleine et al. 1995; Myers 1985; Noble and Walker 1997). More research is needed to explain how families interact with object constellations and how relationships among objects influence their categorization and function as special objects (Kleine and Baker 2004). Toward this end, adopting a view of tensions among bundles of identities gives a framework for examining how meanings of special objects are layered and contested within families.

By bringing together previously disparate streams of research, we introduced a sensitizing theoretical framework for how families draw on marketplace resources to manage collective identity interplay. We intend for this framework to provide a foundation for future research in this area and to challenge family consumption scholars to move to multiple, collective units of analysis to uncover processes related to family identity construction. Specifically, the research questions put forth in this article serve as starting points for the empirical investigation of how families construct and manage tensions, synergies, and commitments among individual, relational, and family identities that get constituted in consumers' selection and experience of activities.

APPENDIX

TABLE A1

RELATED CONSTRUCTS FOR STUDYING FAMILY IDENTITY AND CONSUMPTION

Construct	Definition	Operalization
Family	"Networks of people who share their lives over long periods of time bound by ties of marriage, blood, or commitment, legal or otherwise, who consider themselves as family and who share a significant history and anticipated future of functioning in a family relationship" (Galvin, Bylund, and Brommel 2004, 6).	Defined through family members' own conceptions of membership.
Family identity	The family's subjective sense of its own continuity over time, its present situation, and its character. It is the gestalt of qualities and attributes that make it a particular family and that differentiate it from other families (Bennett et al. 1988, 212).	
Structural	Indicates not only the boundaries of family membership but also the hierarchy and roles of family members.	Defined through family members' own conceptions of membership and roles; observation of family rituals, focusing on boundaries.
Generational	The extent to which the family considers past and future generations.	Family photo assessment (adapted Blinn 1988; Hirsch 1997); family heirlooms assessment using auto-driving (i.e., desire to pass on family possessions; Curasi 2006); open-ended interview questions.
Character	The family's shared characteristics or personality, such as common activities, tastes, and values.	Open-ended interviews that describe one's family in relation to other families they know and to normative views of family (i.e., their perception of the typical family); narrative content analysis to reveal family themes (Riessman 1993); Rokeach Value Survey (Rokeach 1973).
Relational identity	A subgroup's subjective sense of its own continuity over time, its present situation, and its character. The qualities and attributes that make it a particular subgroup and that differentiate it from other subgroups (adapted from family identity definition in Bennett et al. [1988]).	See and adapt family identity operationalization above.
Communication forms	How families perform themselves to themselves and to others (Langellier and Peterson 2004, 112).	
Rituals	Voluntary performance of appropriately patterned symbolic behavior (Rothenbuhler 1998).	Family Ritual Questionnaire (Fiese and Kline 1993).
Narratives	Stories that are coherent accounts of particular experiences, temporally structured, and context sensitive (Baumeister and Newman 1994).	Collective storytelling (Mandelbaum 1987; Polanyi 1985); narrative analysis (Riessman 1993); analysis of "imagetexts" (Hirsch 1997); auto-driving techniques to reveal consumption narratives (Heisley and Levy 1991; McCracken 1989).
Social dramas	Public responses to violations that motivate discourse and redressive action such as public admonishment or affirmation (Carbaugh 1996).	Participant observation.
Intergenerational transfers	Exchange of tangibles and intangibles from one generation to another.	Adapt intergenerational influence measures to include tangibles and intangibles (i.e., Moore et al. 2002; Moore-Shay and Lutz 1988).
Everyday interactions	Collective mundane communication events in shared time-space (Baxter 2004), including consumption activities such as eating breakfast together or watching television (Kleine, Kleine, and Kernan 1993).	Family Integration Scale (Sebald and Andrews 1962) measures individuals' reports of shared family activities (eight items), such as participation in hobbies, picnics, or movies; self-recording of everyday life events using diaries/journals (Wheeler and Ries 1991).
Symbols	Physical objects, behavioral actions, places, events/times, and cultural artifacts that identify social groups (Baxter 1987; Belk 1988; Carbaugh 1996).	Semiotic analysis (Grayson and Shulman 2000; Mick 1986); auto-driving techniques (Heisley and Levy 1991; McCracken 1989); depth interviews; participant observation; projective techniques such as ZMET (Christensen and Olsen 2002).
Adaptability	The ability of a family to change its communication forms, symbols, and norms for identity enactment in response to situational and developmental transitions.	Adapt Olson's (1992) FACES II Adaptability Scales.

Disruptions	Voluntary or involuntary changes in status that are discrete and bounded in duration that interrupt family life (Andreasen 1984; George 1993).	PERI Life Events Scale, which consists of 102 life events (Dohrenwend et al. 1973); critical point graphical interviewing technique (Braithwaite et al. 1998).
Member agreement	The extent to which individual family members' descriptions of their family match or deviate from those of other family members (Stone 1988).	Comparison of identity elements (scales/structural definitions) across family members; see also Bagozzi (2000).
Commitment to collective identity practice	A mindset or behavior that increases the likelihood that an individual or group will maintain group enactments (adapted from Allen and Meyer 1990).	Adapt measures from interpersonal commitment, organizational commitment (i.e., Mowday, Porter, and Steers 1982), and psychological involvement in family (i.e., Friedman and Greenhaus 2000).
Synergy among individual, relational, and family identities	Whether and how individual family members' identities are consistent with the family's collective or relational identities (Epp and Arnould 2006; Stone 1988).	Analysis of collective narratives to identify how families present tensions and synergies; items such as "my sense of who I am matches my sense of my family" (adapted from Bhattacharya and Sen [2003]); adapt measurement scales for the Differentiation in the Family System Scale (Anderson and Sabatelli 1992).
Barriers to enactment	Competing time, space, role, and resource demands within which family identity practices are situated.	Socioeconomic measures (i.e., geographic dispersion, income, occupation, and time spent engaging in various activities) coupled with measures about family members' perceptions of constraints in these areas (Friedman and Greenhaus 2000).
Family identity needs	A collective desire to reconstruct or change identity, maintain or reinforce the current conception of identity, or generate a different response	Means-end laddering to uncover needs with a focus on families' problem-solving strategies (Gengler and Reynolds 2001); adapt goal constructs to focus on analysis of family themes and projects (Huffman, Ratneshwar, and Mick 2000); participant observation of changes in ritual performance; analysis of consumer narrative content and structure to reveal goals (Escalas and Bettman 2000).

NOTE.—One of the best ways to understand the family unit or system as a whole is to assess multiple dyads within the family as the unit of analysis (Anderson and Sabatelli 1992). Focusing on multiple dyads within the family presents the diverse perspectives of family members and offers a more complete understanding of the family unit (Curasi, Price, and Arnould 2004). Empirical studies of family, across disciplines, rarely move beyond the dyadic level of analysis. Typically, the unit of analysis is a single dyad within the family. As such, a need to expand beyond this level of analysis in family research exists and merits attention from family scholars in consumer research. When possible, researchers should attempt to include all family members (as defined by participants) in data collection.

TABLE A2

SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF A FRAMEWORK OF IDENTITY INTERPLAY TO CONSUMER RESEARCH

Area of consumer research	Traditional approach	Identity interplay approach
Unit of analysis	♦ Individual or collective (typically dyads).	♦ Multiple relational bundles (including collective).
Consumer identity	♦ Self-product/brand congruency. ♦ Situational selves (role theory) and managing identity tensions within individuals. ♦ Identification (how individuals identify with brand communities, subcultures, and other groups).	♦ Views products/brands as resources for co-constructing relational identities. ♦ Explains the interplay among individual, relational, and family identities. ♦ Adopts a relational view of identity, focusing on how overlapping identity bundles pattern consumption behaviors.
Family transitions	♦ Family Life Cycle (FLC) models (although updated, still based on household boundaries). ♦ Assumes life stage determines consumption behavior (i.e., groups all divorced families together). ♦ Considers family-level responses to disruption.	♦ Overcomes structural limitations by considering the character and generational components of family identity. ♦ Highlights consumption-related behaviors that families engage in to restore, maintain, or reconstruct a sense of family during transitions. ♦ Considers fragmented responses among identity bundles to disruption (especially related to member agreement, synergy, and commitment).
Family decision making	♦ Relative influence strategies (individuals' goals). ♦ Goal: maximizing individual utility and satisfaction. ♦ Family member roles in group decisions. ♦ Decision making processes (i.e., stage-based; muddling through).	♦ Shifts focus to co-constructed, relational-unit goals. ♦ Goal: using the marketplace to produce relationships (i.e., "doing" family). ♦ Addresses the impact of synergy among relational identities on decision making. ♦ Identity-construction and management processes that highlight the insertion of consumption decisions into collectivities and relationships (and considers barriers).
Intergenerational family influences	♦ Inalienability of certain family possessions. ♦ Development of intergenerational influences based on structure and environment of family life or strength of family relationships.	♦ Demonstrates the role of family identity in intergenerational transfers (e.g., brand preferences, choice rules, marketplace beliefs, inalienable wealth, and socialization). ♦ Explains why intergenerational transfers occur in some families but not in others. ♦ Examines the considerable and shared roles of communication forms (i.e. rituals and narratives) in transmitting family identity across generations.
Special objects	♦ Possessions as extensions of the self. ♦ Objects as symbolic markers/anchors with different objects important to changing identity projects (relatively static meanings).	♦ Possessions as essential resources in projects of relatedness. ♦ Considers intersections between the biography of objects and the biography of families, moving beyond the static view of objects by considering identity in process. ♦ Reformulates our connections to special objects and highlights the importance of possession constellations, using a multi-identity bundle lens.

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