Do the Clothes Make the Man? How Gaps Between Current and Ideal Self Goals Shape Product-Related Perceptions and Behaviors

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Business Administration in the Graduate School of Duke University

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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

I present a framework that describes how perceived discrepancies from an ideal, or hoped-for, self influence how people view and behave with products associated with identity attainment (i.e., “symbolic props”). In the first half of this framework, I demonstrate that individuals who perceive that they are more discrepant from their aspired identity (i.e., more aspirationally discrepant individuals) view symbolic props as more “instrumental,” or useful, in helping them achieve identity goals. I demonstrate that this effect is egocentric, mediated by motivation, and only occurs when the perceived rate of progress toward one’s aspirational goals is high enough to merit engagement toward the goal. In the second half of the framework, I show that for more aspirationally discrepant individuals, the use of symbolic props may actually limit effort on goal-relevant tasks. These studies suggest an ironic effect whereby aspirational discrepancy may lead to acquisition of goal-relevant props to the detriment of performance-relevant effort.
In memory of Maria-Luz Daza Samper
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1. Do the Clothes Make the Man? How Gaps Between Current and Ideal Self Goals Shape Product-Related Perceptions and Behavior

1.1 Introduction

A growing body of research demonstrates that consumers use products to compensate for perceived deficiencies in their level of identity attainment. MBA students with lower GPAs tend to wear more expensive watches and shoes than those who are succeeding academically (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982), individuals perceiving a reduced sense of power are willing to spend more on luxury goods (Rucker and Galinsky 2008), and people with fewer economic resources actually spend proportionally more on status-enhancing positional goods than the wealthy individuals that they are trying to emulate (Charles, Hurst, and Roussanov 2009; Christen and Morgan 2005). Consistent with this set of findings, an initial pilot study I conducted revealed that undergraduate students who had not yet obtained a summer job valued a suit and set of cufflinks more highly relative to those students who had already secured a summer position. Such phenomena raise questions about how consumers view products that are associated with identity attainment. Do individuals actually believe that use of these products will bring them closer to their aspired identity goals? Further, how do these products actually impact consumers’ behavior when used in identity-relevant tasks?

In this dissertation, I aim to address these questions, drawing from research on self-discrepancy, self-regulation and social comparison. In particular, I examine how people
differentially view and behave with products that are associated with identity attainment depending on how discrepant they perceive they currently are from their ideal, or hoped-for self (their aspirational discrepancy). These products associated with identity attainment, or “symbolic props,” can be more functional items that are touted as helping one arrive at an aspired identity (e.g., a fashion self-improvement guide) or products that the consumer already views as emblematic of identity attainment (e.g., a high end set of golf clubs; a leather business padfolio). I find that individuals who feel they are more discrepant from their aspired identity view these props as more instrumental, or useful, in helping them achieve their identity goals, yet these individuals are also more likely to exert reduced effort when using these products in identity-relevant tasks. Such findings have significant implications for marketers and for consumer welfare, as the same goods that are most attractive to more aspirationally discrepant individuals may be likely to hamper their efforts toward achieving their goals. Understanding the drivers of increased desire and reduced effort may enable interruption of this cycle of negative returns to increased spending on identity attainment.

Theoretically, this dissertation extends research on the impact of goal activation on perceptions of goal-relevant objects and the impact of product use on self-perceptions and behavior. Previous work has examined the impact of self-discrepancies on perceptions of goal-related products when visceral states such as addiction or hunger were activated and product efficacy was certain (Brendl, Markman, and Messner 2003; Markman and Brendl
2000) (i.e., eating will satisfy hunger; a cigarette will satisfy a nicotine craving). I extend this work by examining how self-discrepancies impact perceptions of products when the relationship between goal attainment and the use of an object is uncertain to bring one to their desired end state. Symbolic props are merely associated with, and don’t necessarily lead to, aspirational identity attainment. I find that while a larger aspirational discrepancy should logically be associated with a lower likelihood that a mere product will help someone arrive at their aspirational goals, individuals’ greater motivation to achieve their goals when aspirational self-discrepancy is high actually translates into increased perceptions of product efficacy and value.

In addition, by exploring the consequences of product use, I begin to explore a burgeoning literature on the impact of the actual product consumption experience on self-perceptions and behavior. Work by Burson (2007) has demonstrated that the use of skill-based products may shape self-perceptions of skill and hence, product choice. Park and Roedder-John (2010) have demonstrated that specific brand personalities have the positive consequence of “rubbing off” on consumers who wear them, depending on their beliefs about their personality. Finally, Gino, Norton and Ariely (2010) have demonstrated that wearing counterfeit products makes individuals feel less authentic and increases their likelihood of behaving dishonestly. The impact of product use on individuals at differing perceived distances from their identity goals, however, has yet to be examined. I demonstrate that, for individuals who feel further from their identity goals, the use of an
identity-related product can have unanticipated negative consequences on self-perceptions and behavior.

I present a framework, depicted in Figures 1 and 2, which examine two aspects determining how products may influence aspirational goal pursuit. The first aspect focuses on the anticipatory perceptions of goal-related products, looking at how discrepancy and motivation shape perceptions of a symbolic product’s “instrumentality” in goal achievement. I define instrumentality as the anticipated efficacy attributed to a product in benefiting goal-relevant performance or outcomes. In an initial pilot study, I establish that aspirational discrepancy influences people’s perceptions and purchase likelihood of identity-related products. I next demonstrate that greater aspirational discrepancy actually increases perceptions of the efficacy, or instrumentality, of the prop (S1). Supporting a motivational basis for this effect, I demonstrate that this effect is egocentric (S2), holding only when the individual himself feels aspirationally discrepant and not when he makes judgments about another aspirationally discrepant individual. I show that this effect is mediated by motivation and reveal the boundary condition that it can be turned off if the perceived rate of progress toward one’s aspirational goals is too low to merit engagement toward the goal (S3). In the final part of this section, I demonstrate that aspirational discrepancies exacerbate differences in the perceptions of products that are more (vs. less) emblematic of the aspired identity (S4).
**Figure 1: Theoretical Framework of Anticipated Instrumentality**

The second part of the framework moves beyond anticipatory perceptions of instrumentality to examine the consequences of symbolic prop use. I demonstrate that, despite being anticipated as beneficial to goal pursuit, the use of these props has the ironic downstream effect of causing more aspirationally discrepant individuals to reduce their effort on goal-relevant tasks (S5). I show that this reduction in effort occurs only with the use of high-compatibility props and is accompanied by reduced self-perceptions of how similar one is to the aspired identity (S6). Across these studies, I draw from multiple identity domains and populations to show that for individuals feeling far from their aspirational goals, identity-related props are the most alluring to acquire in the process of goal pursuit, yet are the most detrimental to use in goal-related activities.
Figure 2: Theoretical Framework of Consequences of Prop Use

In the theoretical background, I first look at how aspirational discrepancies increase perceptions of prop instrumentality. I then shift toward the examination of the actual use of props in identity-relevant tasks.

1.2 Motivation and Perceptions of Prop Instrumentality

In this section, I draw upon work in self-regulation, self-discrepancy and goal compatibility to propose that greater aspirational discrepancy increases perceived prop instrumentality and that this perception of instrumentality is unique to the individual’s perception of a highly discrepant self (i.e., it does not hold when the individual evaluates another highly discrepant individual). I suggest that the relationship between aspirational discrepancy and prop instrumentality is motivationally driven and hence should not persist.
when motivation is thwarted, i.e., when individuals perceive that they are making an insufficient rate of progress toward their aspirational goals. Finally, I examine how aspirational discrepancy impacts differentiation between products perceived to have high and low goal compatibility.

1.2.1 The impact of self-discrepancies on prop instrumentality

A vast body of literature on self-regulation and goal pursuit suggests that the strength of an individual’s motivation is driven by the size of the discrepancy between his current state and attainment of the goal state (e.g., Carver and Scheier 1990, 1998; Duval and Wicklund 1972; Higgins 1987; Locke and Latham 2002). This work has typically examined how people compare themselves with a referent, such as an idealized self, an ought self, or a standard set by external forces (see Boldero and Francis 2002, for a review). The perceived discrepancy between the current position and the referent position leads to a motivation to reduce the discrepancy. While different self-discrepancy theories posit varying hypotheses on the emotions related to goal pursuit (Carver and Scheier 1998; Duval and Wicklund 1972; Higgins 1987), the core assumption remains that the assessment of a self-discrepancy activates a goal to reduce the discrepancy between one’s actual state and the desired end state. People continuously assess their progress toward this end state, and active goals influence the behavior of a system until individuals either arrive at the end state or they abandon these goals (Atkinson and Birch 1970).
Thus, feeling more discrepant from one's aspired or ideal self (Markus and Nurius 1986) should activate a goal to reduce the discrepancy. Consistent with this work, activated goals have been shown to influence how people view the attractiveness of goal-relevant objects (Brendl and Higgins 1996; Brendl et al. 2003; Markman and Brendl 2000; Ratneshwar, Mick, and Huffman 2000). Poor children estimate coin sizes as larger than well-to-do children (Bruner and Goodman 1947), and deprived smokers judged the length of a cigarette to be longer than non-deprived smokers (Markman and Brendl 2000). As described earlier, symbolic props are by definition associated with a desired goal end-state and hence are goal-relevant. As such, I suggest that greater aspirational discrepancy should influence the extent to which people see these props as useful or instrumental in helping them achieve their aspired identity goals. This leads to my first hypothesis,

H1: Greater aspirational self-discrepancies should lead to higher perceived instrumentality of goal-related products (symbolic props).

1.2.2 The motivational and egocentric roots of prop instrumentality

In order to support the motivational influence of aspirational discrepancy on prop instrumentality, it is important to demonstrate that perceived prop instrumentality is contingent upon the self (vs. an observed other) perceiving an aspirational discrepancy. Thus, while one’s own perceived aspirational discrepancy should drive goal activation and determine prop instrumentality, merely observing a large aspirational discrepancy in another should not lead to this same activation. If this were the case, greater discrepancy
resulting in greater instrumentality could be due to the more cognitive explanation that more discrepant individuals have greater room for improvement and hence are by definition more likely to benefit from the use of symbolic props.

Thus, I suggest that absent the enhancement biases invoked when evaluating the self (e.g., Alicke and Govorun 2005; Dunning 2005), perceiving another individual at a great distance from his aspirational goals, such as a novice golfer, would be unlikely to engender a belief that this other will benefit from the use of a high-end, symbolic product, such as a set of clubs typically used by professionals. In this case, consistent with prior research on skill-based products (Burson 2007), consumers should be more likely to match the valuation of products to the individual’s relative standing or skill. Thus, absent an egocentric bias, individuals should believe that expert golfers will receive the greatest benefit from a high-end golf club, while novice golfers will receive less of a benefit from this type of club. This leads to my next set of hypotheses:

H2: Aspirational discrepancy should interact with perspective such that:

H2a: Greater discrepancy will increase perceived prop instrumentality for the self.

H2b: Greater discrepancy will decrease perceived prop instrumentality for another.

1.2.3 The role of one’s perceived rate of goal progress on motivation

Importantly, another boundary condition emerges from the fact that the relationship between self-discrepancy and self-related goal pursuit is not monotonic (e.g., Duval, Duval, and Mulilis 1992; Duval and Wicklund 1972). Research has shown that recognition of a self-
discrepancy leads to implicit appraisal of the likelihood of reducing the discrepancy (cf. Bandura 1977; Lazarus 1966), which determines whether individuals will engage in goal pursuit. Carver and Scheier (1981) describe this appraisal as outcome expectancy favorability and state that when expectancies are favorable, individuals renew efforts to match the self to standards. Scheier and Carver (1988) later hypothesized that one antecedent of outcome expectancy favorability is assessment of the degree to which the discrepancy reduction system is making adequate progress toward reducing the self-standard discrepancy (cf. Bandura 1986; Duval et al. 1992; Hsee and Abelson 1991; Locke and Latham 2002). Thus, as described by Duval et al. (1992), “to the extent that this ‘meta-monitoring’ function registers the rate of progress toward self-standard discrepancy reduction as ‘adequate’ relative to some reference value, outcome expectations will be favorable” (p. 341), and hence individuals will likely continue engagement in goal pursuit.

This has been shown empirically by Duval et al. (1992), who find that increasing the perceived rate of progress to a sufficient degree alters the behavior of persons with large discrepancies from attempts to avoid the discrepancy-reducing task to attempts to conform self to standard by actively participating in the task. To the extent individuals believe that their rate of progress is sufficient relative to the magnitude of the problem, they are motivated to engage in discrepancy reduction. However, if they believe their rate of progress is insufficient, they avoid self-awareness and disengage from goal pursuit. This
suggests an important interaction between aspirational discrepancy and an individual’s perceived rate of goal progress:

**H3:** Aspirational discrepancy should interact with the perceived rate of goal progress such that a greater discrepancy should (not) increase motivation to improve when the rate of progress being made toward the focal goal is sufficiently high (insufficient).

Given the proposed motivational mechanism underlying prop instrumentality, this has similar implications for prop instrumentality. That is, when the rate of progress is not presumed to be high enough, there should be no influence of aspirational discrepancy on perceptions of prop instrumentality. Thus, this leads to my next hypothesis:

**H4:** Aspirational discrepancy should interact with the perceived rate of goal progress such that a greater discrepancy should (not) increase perceived prop instrumentality when the rate of progress being made toward the focal goal is sufficiently high (insufficient).

Finally, consistent with a motivational mechanism underlying the effects of self-discrepancy on prop instrumentality, I predict the following mediation:

**H5:** The interaction between aspirational discrepancy and the perceived rate of goal progress should be mediated by motivation to improve.
1.2.4 Aspirational discrepancy and perceptions of goal compatibility

Aspirational discrepancy also impacts how individuals differentiate between symbolic and non-symbolic products. Research on goal compatibility suggests that “the value of an object is a function of the compatibility of that object to the active goal” (Markman and Brendl 2000; p. 107). As described above, greater self-discrepancies increase goal activation, which should increase prop instrumentality. However, specific props may be more or less compatible with the aspirational goal at hand. For example, if the focal goal is to secure a job in business, using a leather padfolio for one’s interview will likely be seen as more compatible than using a spiral notebook. Supporting this, Markman and Brendl (2000) suggest that the more typical an object as a means of reaching a higher-order goal, the more instrumental the object is perceived to be. In this sense, products that are more associated with exemplars of the identity should be seen as more instrumental in goal pursuit. Given that self-discrepancy drives goal activation when the rate of goal progress is deemed sufficient, more (vs. less) aspirationally discrepant individuals should also be more likely to differentiate props based on goal-compatibility. Thus,

H6: Aspirational discrepancy should interact with product goal-compatibility such that a larger discrepancy should increase differences in the perceived instrumentality of high- and low-compatibility goal-relevant products.
Having discussed the influence of aspirational discrepancies and relevant moderators on consumers’ perceptions of prop instrumentality, it is important to understand how these anticipations bear out in actual use. Do symbolic props live up to the expectations that aspirationally discrepant consumers have for them? In the next section, I build on the theory presented thus far to predict the interactive effect of aspirational discrepancy and symbolic props on goal-relevant behavior.

1.3 Use of Instrumental Props

In this section, I extend work in skill-matching (Burson 2007) and identity standards (e.g., Dijksterhuis et al. 1998; Mussweiler 2001; Mussweiler, Ruter, and Epstude 2004; Stapel and Koomen 2001; Wheeler, DeMarree, and Petty 2007) to suggest that the experience of using a symbolic prop may actually lead to contrast in feelings of similarity to one’s aspired identity and reduced effort on identity-relevant tasks.

1.3.1 Self-discrepancy, self-perceptions and behavioral consequences

Recent evidence suggests that product use, even for a short period of time, can shape later consumption processes. Burson (2007) showed that attempting easier or harder putts shaped product choice; specifically, greater perceived skill following use (as manipulated with an easier putt) led individuals to choose more professional or “higher end” golf products. Looking at self-perceptions, Park and Roedder-John (2010) showed that brands with appealing personalities can “rub off” on consumers, causing certain consumers to assimilate to the personality of the brand after carrying around a branded product. Gino,
Norton and Ariely (2010) demonstrated that wearing counterfeit sunglasses elicited conflict between the desired signal sent by the item and the actual signal sent to the self (“I am a fake” p. 712). This made individuals feel less authentic and increased their likelihood of exhibiting unethical behavior.

To date, however, research has not focused on the impact of perceived self-discrepancy on product use, although various types of self-discrepancies or deficiencies have been shown to predict product choice and desire (Charles et al. 2009; Christen and Morgan 2005; Gao, Wheeler, and Shiv 2008; Rucker and Galinsky 2008; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). Two important factors influence product use in the context of aspirational self-discrepancies. First, thinking about and using products associated with aspired identities may elicit perceptions of an ideal-self or standard (Fitzsimons, Chartrand, and Fitzsimons 2008). Second, individuals are predisposed to match product preferences with their own ability level, particularly when this ability level is made salient (Burson 2007). A mismatch may result in conflict: individuals may desire products associated with their aspired self, but feel uncomfortable actually using products that do not reflect their true skill or ability level (i.e., their proximity to their aspired identity).

Such conflict from a lack of a perceived match may enhance contrast in identity-related self-perceptions. Specifically, work in social comparison (Mussweiler 2001; Mussweiler et al. 2004) and priming (e.g., Dijksterhuis et al. 1998; Stapel and Koomen 2001; Wheeler et al. 2007) has suggested that salient dissimilarity or discrepancy from a standard
may lead to downward self-perceptions and contrast in behavior (Mussweiler et al. 2004). I propose that viewing or evaluating a product before use may not make the mismatch (dissimilarity) salient, leading to judgments that a product reflects desirable and even an ideal self or standard (i.e., greater prop instrumentality) (Fitzsimons et al. 2008). However, product use, or an extended experience with a product, may make the mismatch more salient and elicit the judgment that one should “live up” to the expectations set by the product (Burson 2007). For individuals with smaller self-discrepancies, there is a closer match between the self and the standard. For individuals who already feel discrepant from their goals, however, there is by definition a mismatch.

Thus, if a large self-discrepancy is made salient, individuals may feel that they are not “living up” to what the product represents, leading to reduced identity-related self-perceptions. While these self-perceptions may only be temporary (Richins 1991) and may not necessarily affect how far individuals feel they are from their aspired identity, they can be informative to goal pursuit. That is, if using a designer bag, a symbol of high fashion, makes you feel less fashionable, perhaps you should reduce your efforts and abandon your fashion goals.

Consistent with work on priming and motivation, these self-perceptions should have downstream consequences on behavior. Wheeler and colleagues’ “Active Self” (2007) framework posits that individuals change their behavior consistent with the self-concept (see also Dijksterhuis et al. 1998; Haddock, Macrae, and Fleck 2002). If self-perceptions with
respect to a given identity are reduced, individuals should be less motivated to work as hard on tasks relevant to that goal. Thus, I hypothesize that:

H7: Aspirational discrepancy should interact with product type such that greater discrepancy should reduce identity-related self-perceptions with use of a high-compatibility product (vs. a low-compatibility product or no product at all).

H8: Aspirational discrepancy should interact with product type such that greater discrepancy should reduce performance effort with use of a use of a high-compatibility product (vs. a low-compatibility product or no product at all).

H9: The effects of discrepancy and product on behavior should be mediated by self-perceptions.

In this sense, while more discrepant consumers may anxiously anticipate the benefits of certain products in helping them arrive at their goals, the use of these products may elicit perceptions of contrast between the self and standard that reduce identity-related self-perceptions and limit effort on goal-related tasks. By looking at multiple stages of the consumption process, I am able to demonstrate that for more discrepant consumers, following anticipations of product performance may lead to negative consequences.

### 1.4 Overview of Studies

Across six studies and four separate identity domains, I examine how and when aspirational discrepancies influence prop instrumentality and performance effort. In an initial pilot, I demonstrate that aspirational discrepancy in a consumer context can shape
product perceptions and purchase likelihood. Study 1 demonstrates the effect of aspirational discrepancy on a product’s perceived efficacy, or instrumentality in goal pursuit. Studies 2-4 demonstrate and elaborate upon the motivational underpinnings of this effect. Study 2 manipulates aspirational discrepancy in a golfing context to demonstrate an important boundary condition, namely that this effect only holds when individuals feel self-discrepant themselves, suggesting that it is a function of own-goal activation. Study 3 demonstrates that this effect is driven by motivation and is bounded by whether people perceive that they are making adequate progress toward their aspirational goal. Study 4 extends previous work on goal activation to demonstrate that self-discrepancy influences the extent to which individuals differentiate between high- and low- compatibility goal-relevant products. Studies 5 and 6 shift to examine the behavioral consequences of prop use. In study 5, I demonstrate that aspirational discrepancy can interact with the type of prop to reduce effort on goal-relevant tasks for those who are further from their goals. Finally, in study 6, I examine the process by which goal-relevant props can lead to contrast in behavior, showing that symbolic product use shakes identity-related self-perceptions and also reduces effort toward goal-relevant tasks.

**1.5 Pilot: “Smell Like a Man, Man”**

In this pilot study, I sought to establish that one’s perceived discrepancy from an identity goal can influence anticipated perceptions of identity-related products and purchase likelihood.
1.5.1 Method

Participants and design. Forty-three male students ($M_{age}=23.3$) were recruited online to participate in this short correlational study. Participants were told that the first part of the study was an assessment of individual differences and the second part of the study was about television commercial effectiveness. First, to measure participants' assessments of aspirational discrepancy regarding various traits associated with masculinity, I employed a modification of the Markus and Nurius (1986)Selves questionnaire, previously used by Sela and Shiv (2009) to assess self-discrepancy in a fitness domain. Each participant was instructed to rate each of three trait statements (muscular, dominant, and weak) on 1) the extent to which it described him now and 2) the extent to which he would like this to describe him in the future (1=Not at all, 4=Somewhat, 7=Very much). Consistent with Sela and Shiv's (2009) work, to capture discrepancy while controlling for starting and ending points, I subtracted the current self rating from the ideal self rating for each trait and then formed an index across all 3 measures ($\alpha=.85$). In this and subsequent studies, a “low” or “small” discrepancy indicates that individuals do not feel particularly discrepant from their aspired or hoped-for selves, while a “high” or “large” discrepancy implies that individuals perceive they are quite discrepant from their aspired or hoped-for selves.

Next, participants were told that they would be watching a set of commercials and would be answering questions on them. The focal commercial was a commercial for “Old Spice” body wash, a highly successful online commercial that associates the scent of Old
Spice with masculinity ("Smell like a man!") and being attractive to women (see text in Appendix A). Following the commercial, participants rated the extent to which they believed that Old Spice Body wash reflected masculinity (Not at all=1, Very much so=7) and how likely they were to buy Old Spice body wash (Not at all likely=1; Very likely=7).

1.5.2 Results and Discussion

Results revealed that greater discrepancy lead to greater perceptions that Old Spice reflected masculinity ($r=.38$, $p<.02$) and greater likelihood of buying the body wash ($r=.33$, $p<.05$). As recommended by Zhao, Lynch and Chen (2010), a bootstrapping mediation analysis at a 95th CI with 5000 samples (Preacher and Hayes 2004, 2008), revealed that perceptions of masculinity drove the effect of discrepancy on purchase likelihood. The indirect pathway had an estimated coefficient of .22 with a 95% confidence interval that did not include 0 (0.0420, 0.53). This finding supports the notion that greater discrepancy shapes perceptions of identity-associated products. While it does not directly tap into efficacy, it does appear that the discrepancy impacts a belief in the product’s masculinity, which drives purchase. Is it the case that more discrepant individuals actually believe that buying the product will help them become more masculine? In the next six studies I demonstrate that discrepancy does influence how effective (instrumental) individuals believe that identity-related products are in bringing to them toward their goals, yet that the use of these products may have unanticipated and counterproductive effects on behavior.
1.6 Study 1: Discrepancy Drives Instrumentality and Desire

Study 1 was designed to directly test how discrepancy from a goal shapes perceptions of prop instrumentality in a new identity domain. This study was run with a sample of women who were strongly interested in fashion and manipulated perceived discrepancy from a fashion goal to examine how individuals differentially viewed products associated with this goal.

1.6.1 Method

Participants and design. One hundred and twelve women were recruited from an online panel (M_age = 44.5) of a fashion magazine to participate in this 2-cell (aspirational discrepancy: low vs. high, manipulated) between-subjects design. This particular panel is described by the magazine as a community of “style-savvy” insiders who have opportunities to test new products, share their opinions on fashion and receive fashion updates on the latest trends.

Procedure. Participants were asked to think about their “signature style,” or a “just-right personal style that feels like you and fits your personality and lifestyle.” They were also asked think about their “shopping savvy,” or their ability to “find items that emphasized this sense of style.”

Distance manipulation. Participants’ perceived distance from their fashion goals was then manipulated using a modification of Schwarz et al.’s (1991) ease of retrieval manipulation. Specifically, those in the low (high) discrepancy condition were asked to list
two (five) items in their wardrobe that they believed would reflect their personal style and two (five) times that they exhibited “shopping savvy.” I reasoned that because individuals who had to recall more examples of items and shopping savvy would find this task to be more difficult, they would see themselves as less fashionable and further from their fashion goals. Because individuals who had to list fewer examples would find this task to be less difficult, they would see themselves as more fashionable and closer to their fashion goals.

**Manipulation Check.** Participants were asked to list how difficult it was to think of the items and situations they were asked to list on the prior screens (Very easy=1, Very difficult=7) as well as how far they felt from the goal of effectively expressing their signature style (Very close=1, Very far=7).

**Prop instrumentality.** Participants were next presented with the titles and synopses of two different books described as helping one hone in on their signature style. These books received 5-star ratings on Amazon.com and the synopses were drawn from the Amazon.com book descriptions (see Appendix B). To see how discrepancy shaped the perceived effectiveness of these identity-related products in self-improvement, participants were asked to rate how helpful they felt each book would be in identifying their signature style (Not at all=1, Very =7).
1.6.2 Results

The goal of this study was to manipulate aspirational discrepancy and to test H1, predicting that greater aspirational discrepancy from a fashion goal should lead to increased perceived instrumentality of a product associated with that goal.

**Manipulation check.** Consistent with the nature of the manipulation, (high discrepancy) participants asked to list 5 items and situations found the task more difficult than (low discrepancy) participants asked to list 2 items and situations ($M_{\text{High}}=3.09$ vs. $M_{\text{Low}}=2.16$, where higher numbers reflect greater difficulty; $F(1,110)=9.58, p<.003$). Most importantly, participants in the high discrepancy condition did in fact feel further from their signature style goals relative to those in the low discrepancy condition ($M_{\text{High}}=3.78$ vs. $M_{\text{Low}}=3.14$, where higher numbers reflect greater distance; $F(1,110)=3.78, p=.05$).

**Prop instrumentality.** Consistent with H1, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that individuals in the high discrepancy condition felt that the signature style books would be more effective in helping them improve their signature style relative to those in the low discrepancy condition ($M_{\text{High}}=4.04$ vs. $M_{\text{Low}}=3.47$, $F(1,110)=3.78, p=.05$).

1.6.3 Discussion

Study 1 establishes the basic effect that individuals who feel further from their aspired identity goals believe that products described as being associated with an aspired identity will have greater efficacy in improvement toward the aspired identity. Though not focal to efficacy, in other results I also found that these individuals were willing to pay more
for these products. Importantly, while this result supports H1, it is unclear from this study whether this is due to a belief that the products will be more efficacious for more discrepant individuals because they have greater room for improvement, or if it is driven by increased motivation brought on by the discrepancy. In addition, the products presented in study 1 were explicitly described as being associated with the aspired identity, so it is not yet clear if the results would apply to products only implicitly associated with the aspired identity.

Thus, in study 2, in a new golfing identity domain, I aim to address these two issues by examining a moderator and new type of product. Specifically, I manipulate whether individuals are thinking about their own performance with a product or someone else’s to show that this effect is actually egocentric, observed only when individuals’ own goals are activated and they are thinking about their own performance with the products. As such, it is not due to a general belief that greater distance increases possibilities for improvement with a symbolic prop. I also accomplish this demonstration in the context of a set of products that is implicitly associated with the aspired identity.

1.7 Study 2: It’s Not You, It’s Me

In study 2, I manipulate aspirational discrepancy to again support H1 and to compare how the perceived distance of another individual’s aspirational discrepancy affects perceptions of prop instrumentality relative to one’s own perceived discrepancy. A “room for improvement” alternative would suggest that a high end symbolic prop should be more instrumental for all highly discrepant individuals, yet I predict that greater aspirational
discrepancy will be egocentric, increasing prop instrumentality only for the self (H2, H2a). When one considers another individual, decreased aspirational discrepancy will lead to increased perceptions of prop instrumentality (H2b) (i.e., individuals will take the more objective view that a talented golfer will benefit from high end equipment relative to a less talented golfer). Hence, I expect motivational effects to predominate for the self, while skill-matching effects should predominate for others.

1.7.1 Method

Participants and design. One hundred and twenty-one male golfers from an online panel ($M_{\text{age}}=50.91$) were recruited to participate in this 2 (aspirational discrepancy: low vs. high, manipulated) x 2 (perspective: self vs. other) between-subjects experiment.

Procedure. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of two passages, both describing a situation in which an individual was trying to improve his golf game. In the self condition, the individual was “You,” while in the other condition, the individual was described as “Alan,” another golfer:

You (Alan) have (has) been trying to improve your (his) golf game for a year now, and finally sign(s) up for private lessons upon the recommendation of a friend…

Based on the instructor’s observations of your (Alan’s) performance as well as your (their) discussions, he gives you (Alan) a print-out of his assessment of your (his) current and aspired skill level in several areas. He asks that you (Alan) refer back to this frequently so that you (he) can keep your (his) goals in mind in between sessions.

Following the reading of this passage, participants were presented with the instructor’s feedback across three domains, putting, chipping and striking (hitting the ball
with power and direction) (see Appendix C for an example). Depending on condition, this was described as personal feedback or as Alan’s feedback. For each domain, an aspired-to skill goal was presented. For example, for striking, the goal was to be able to strike the ball well enough to hit 70% of the greens in regulation. Individuals in the low discrepancy condition were informed that at their current level, they were striking well enough to hit 60% of greens in regulation. Individuals in the high discrepancy condition were informed that at their current level, they were striking well enough to hit only 10% of greens in regulation. The progress left to go was displayed with a solid arrow covering the remaining space to the goal. This “left to go” framing was a modification of a manipulation used by Fishbach & Koo (2008) and was used to mimic the perception of individuals contemplating a self-discrepancy (i.e., contemplating the remaining ground they need to cover to arrive at their goal). A longer arrow (for those in the high discrepancy condition) denoted a larger aspirational discrepancy while a shorter arrow (for those in the low discrepancy condition) denoted a smaller aspirational discrepancy.

**Discrepancy manipulation check.** Following the feedback screen, participants were asked how far they thought they (Alan) would feel from their (his) aspirational goal of being an accomplished golfer (Very far=1; Very close=7).

**Prop instrumentality.** Participants were then presented with a high-end golf club (Ping) and set of balls (Callaway). These brands had been pretested with the same population as being high in prestige and associated with top golfers. Participants were
asked how much they thought that using each product would improve their (Alan’s) golf game (Not at all=1, Very much so=7).

1.7.2 Results

The goal of this study was to replicate H1, and to test the prediction that greater discrepancy will increase perceived prop instrumentality for the self (H2a), yet decrease perceived prop instrumentality for another (H2b).

Manipulation check. I first examine the effectiveness of the aspirational discrepancy manipulation. Participants in the high discrepancy condition did in fact perceive that they (Alan) would feel further from their (his) goal of being an accomplished golfer than those in the low discrepancy condition (\(M_{\text{High}}=4.32\) vs. \(M_{\text{Low}}=2.36\); \(F(1,119)=62.73, p<.0001\)).

Prop instrumentality. Given the high correlations among the two equipment variables (\(r=.62, p<.0001\)), I formed a product efficacy index by taking the mean of the ratings for the high end golf club and balls. Participants’ perceptions of product efficacy were then analyzed using a 2 (aspirational discrepancy: low vs. high) x 2 (perspective: self vs. other) analysis of variance (ANOVA) (see Figure 2). The analysis did not reveal a main effect of aspirational discrepancy \((F<1)\), yet it did reveal a marginal main effect of perspective whereby individuals evaluating Alan felt that he would receive less of a performance improvement from the high end products than individuals evaluating their own performance improvement from the high end products (\(M_{\text{Alan}}=2.90\) vs. \(M_{\text{Self}}=3.26\), \(F(1,117)=2.72, p=.10\)). In support of H2, the ANOVA revealed a significant discrepancy x
perspective interaction, $F(1, 117)=6.96, p<.01$. Consistent with H2a, planned contrasts revealed that for the self perspective condition, individuals in the high discrepancy condition felt that the products would improve their golf game to a greater extent than those in the low discrepancy condition ($M_{Self, High}=3.57$ vs. $M_{Self, Low}=2.95$, $t(117)=1.97$, $p=.05$). For the other perspective condition, however, this pattern reversed. Supporting H2b, a separate planned contrast revealed that individuals believed that the high end golf products would improve Alan’s performance marginally more when he was less discrepant, or closer to the accomplished golfer goal, relative to when he was further, or more discrepant, from this goal ($M_{Alan, High}=2.63$ vs. $M_{Alan, Low}=3.17$, $t(117)=1.76$, $p<.09$). See Figure 3.

![Figure 3: Study 2 Results, Prop instrumentality as a function of aspirational discrepancy and perspective](image-url)
1.7.3 Discussion

Supporting H1, golfers who perceive themselves as more aspirationally discrepant, or further away from their aspirational golfing goals, believe that they will receive a greater performance benefit from high end equipment associated with top golfers relative to those who perceive themselves as less aspirationally discrepant, or closer to their aspirational golfing goals. Importantly, this effect holds for products implicitly associated with aspired identity in a new, skill-based domain. This effect of discrepancy on instrumentality reverses when one shifts from evaluating the self to evaluating another, suggesting that there is an egocentric bias in how high end products may help the aspirationally discrepant self (vs. another). The “other” finding showing that people believe that skilled players will benefit more from a high-end golf club relative to less skilled players is consistent with Burson’s (2007) work on skill-matching. As before, this pattern of effects was also observed in examining individuals’ willingness to pay (WTP) for these high end golf clubs, whereby WTP increased with increases in anticipated prop instrumentality. The fact that this effect of discrepancy increasing instrumentality only holds for the self supports the notion of an underlying motivational mechanism. In study 3, I examine the proposed mechanism directly with a mediator and explore perceived rate of progress toward the aspired identity goal as a boundary condition.
1.8 Study 3: Knowledge by Consumption

In study 3, in a fashion expertise context, I look at both the underlying driver of the effect of aspirational discrepancy on prop instrumentality (motivation) and at a boundary condition of this effect (individuals’ perceptions of the rate of progress they are making toward their aspired identity goal). I predict in H3 and H4 that greater aspirational discrepancy should not increase motivation and prop instrumentality if the rate of progress toward one’s goals is perceived to be insufficient. Only when the rate of progress is perceived to be sufficient should the effect of greater discrepancy increasing motivation and instrumentality hold. Finally, I predict in H5 that motivation should mediate the aspirational discrepancy x rate of progress interaction on prop instrumentality.

As in the pilot, in this study I used measured aspirational discrepancy (Sela and Shiv 2009) as the predictor. I manipulated the perceived rate of progress toward the focal goal, increasing fashion knowledge, by having participants complete a brand recognition quiz at the beginning of the study that was either easy (fast rate of progress) or difficult (slow rate of progress) before they evaluated a series of products on their instrumentality in achieving the goal of increasing one’s fashion knowledge. I reasoned that the presentation of an easy quiz immediately following participants’ self-reported aspirational discrepancy (which activated the focal fashion knowledge goal) would create a feeling of competency and an associated sense of moving toward the knowledge goal, but the presentation of a difficult quiz would create a feeling of a lack of competency and a sense of stalled progress on this goal.
1.8.1 Method

Participants and design. One hundred and ninety-six women were recruited from the same online fashion magazine panel as study 1 ($M_{age} = 42.11$) to participate in this 2 (aspirational discrepancy: high vs. low, measured) x 2 (quiz condition: slow goal progress vs. fast goal progress, manipulated) between-subjects experiment. Participants were told that the study was about consumer fashion expertise.

Aspirational discrepancy. Participants rated each of five trait statements (fashionable, stylish, up to date with the latest fashion trends, confident in your fashion knowledge, and knowledgeable about up and coming fashion designers) on 1) the extent to which it described her now and 2) the extent to which she would like this to describe her in the future (1=Not at all, 4=Somewhat, 7=Very much). I subtracted the current self rating from the ideal self rating for each trait and then formed an index across all 5 measures ($\alpha=.89$).

Rate of goal progress manipulation. Participants next completed one of two multiple choice, brand logo recognition quizzes that “assessed their fashion knowledge.” These were 10 items long and had been pre-tested to be easy versus difficult. A manipulation check study demonstrated that the easy (hard) quiz led to perceptions of a fast (slow) rate of progress toward fashion knowledge goals, which will be discussed in the results.

Desire to improve (motivation). Following the quiz, yet before the presentation of products, participants were asked the extent to which they would like to improve their
fashion knowledge (Not at all=1, Very much so=7). This measure was designed to assess participants’ level of motivation to improve.

*Prop instrumentality.* Next, participants were presented with 3 products associated with fashion expertise and described as improving fashion expertise: a set of four hard-cover fashion books, a DVD set of fashion films, and a set of weekend passes to a fashion expo. These products had been previously featured in a leading fashion magazine describing “easy ways to feel fashionable” and the content was reframed for this study as being useful to improve fashion expertise. Participants rated the extent to which purchasing each item would improve their fashion expertise (Not at all=1, Very much so=7). After completing these measures, participants were thanked and debriefed.

### 1.8.2 Results

In this study, I predicted that aspirational discrepancy should interact with the perceived rate of goal progress such that greater aspirational discrepancy should not increase motivation (H3) or perceived prop instrumentality (H4) if the rate of progress being made toward the focal goal is perceived to be insufficient. Thus, when the perceived rate of progress is perceived to be slower (as instantiated by the hard quiz condition), there should not be an influence of discrepancy on prop instrumentality. I also tested H5, the prediction that motivation underlies the effect of the discrepancy x rate of progress interaction on prop instrumentality.
To test my hypotheses, I conducted an aspirational discrepancy (continuous) x 2 (diagnostic quiz: easy vs. hard) between-subjects regression analysis. I regressed desire for improvement and the combined prop instrumentality index on independent variables (i) aspirational discrepancy, intervally scaled with higher numbers implying greater discrepancy from one’s aspirational goal; (ii) a dummy variable for quiz condition (easy=1, hard=0); and (iii) their interaction. To examine the impact of aspirational discrepancy within each diagnostic quiz condition, I performed a simple slopes analysis on the dependent variables. I also tested simple effects with a spotlight analysis (Aiken and West 1991). Here and across subsequent studies, all variables were mean-centered. For these and future results, I first present the main effects, then interaction results, simple slopes and then simple effects. Across this and all studies with a discrepancy score as the independent variable, the effects presented are robust to inclusion of just actual self or ideal self ratings in the model. While I test all simple slopes and simple effects for completeness in this study, the primary focus of this study is on testing H4, specifically demonstrating via a significant interaction that the slopes of the easy and hard diagnostic quiz conditions are indeed different and that greater aspirational discrepancy no longer increases prop instrumentality in the hard quiz condition (i.e., when the rate of progress is perceived to be slow). Upon first testing H4 with these analyses, I move on to examining H2 with a mediation analysis.

Quiz manipulation check. A 2-cell (quiz condition: hard vs. easy) manipulation check study verified the different perceptions of goal progress across conditions. One hundred
and eight women ($M_{\text{age}}=45.6$) from the same sample as study 2 participated in this study and completed the same elements of the study up through the assigned brand recognition quiz. After completing the assigned quiz, participants were asked how they felt they were currently progressing toward their fashion knowledge goals (1=Making very slow progress; 7=Making very fast progress). Individuals in the easier quiz condition did indeed feel that they were making more rapid progress toward their fashion knowledge goals than those in the hard quiz condition ($M_{\text{Easy}}=4.57$ vs. $M_{\text{Hard}}=3.95$; $F(1,106)=4.08$, $p<.05$). There were no significant differences in perceived attainability of the goal ($F(1,106)=.37$, $p=.54$), perceived self-efficacy in arriving at the goal ($F(1,106)=0.83$, $p=.36$), or perceived distance from arriving at the goal ($F(1,106)=1.12$, $p=.29$).

**Desire for improvement (motivation).** Consistent with H3, this analysis revealed an interaction between the quiz condition and aspirational discrepancy ($B=.57$, $t(192)=2.43$, $p<.02$). A simple slopes analysis of the impact of aspirational discrepancy at each level of the diagnostic quiz revealed that with the easy quiz (fast progress), aspirational discrepancy predicted increased desire for improvement ($B=.71$, $t(192)=3.79$, $p<.0002$), such that greater aspirational discrepancy led to a greater motivation to improve one’s fashion knowledge. With the hard quiz (slow progress), aspirational discrepancy did not predict desire for improvement ($B=.13$, $t(192)=0.92$, $p=.36$). A simple effects analysis revealed that more aspirationally discrepant individuals had a directionally increased desire to improve their fashion knowledge intentions when the diagnostic quiz was easy relative to when it was
hard ($B=.33$, $t(192)=1.04$, $p=.30$). On the contrary, less discrepant individuals had an increased desire to improve when the quiz was hard relative when it was easy ($B=−.77$, $t(192)=2.48$, $p<.02$). See Figure 4.

![Figure 4: Study 3 Results, Desire for improvement (motivation) as a function of aspirational discrepancy and perceived rate of progress](image)

**Prop instrumentality.** I first created an instrumentality index by collapsing across the perceptions of instrumentality (efficacy) for the three fashion expertise products (Cronbach’s $α=.72$). While regression analysis did not reveal main effects of the diagnostic quiz or of aspirational discrepancy on prop instrumentality ($ts<1$), consistent with H4, this analysis did reveal the predicted diagnostic quiz x aspirational discrepancy interaction ($B=54$, $t(192)=2.56$, $p<.02$). A simple slopes examination at each level of the diagnostic quiz revealed that in the easy quiz condition, greater aspirational discrepancy
predicted increased perceptions of prop instrumentality ($B=.53, t(192) =3.17, p<.002$). In the hard quiz condition, aspirational discrepancy did not predict prop instrumentality ($B=-.01, t(192) =-0.09, p=.93$). A spotlight analysis revealed that more aspirationally discrepant individuals perceived a greater instrumentality benefit when the task was easy relative to hard ($B=.56, t(192) =1.95, p=.05$) while less discrepant individuals perceived a marginally greater instrumentality benefit when the task was hard relative to easy ($B=-.48, t(192) =-1.72, p<.09$). See Figure 5.

![Figure 5](image)

**Figure 5: Study 3 Results, Prop instrumentality as a function of aspirational discrepancy and perceived rate of progress**

*Mediation analysis.* The pattern of results, whereby the diagnostic quiz moderated the impact of aspirational discrepancy on both the proposed mediator, motivation (desire to self-improve) and the dependent variable, overall prop instrumentality, suggests a mediated
moderation. I tested for mediated moderation, examining whether motivation mediated the effect of the quiz x discrepancy interaction on the effort exerted on the fashion task. As in the pilot, I subjected the data to a mediated moderation analysis using the SAS macro and methodology put forth by Preacher and Hayes with 5,000 bootstrapped samples (2004, 2008). This analysis revealed a significant indirect-only mediation of the effect of the quiz x discrepancy interaction on instrumentality by motivation. The quiz x discrepancy interaction affected instrumentality ($B = .54, t(192) = 2.56, p < .02$) and motivation ($B = .57, t(192) = 2.44, p < .02$). Controlling for motivation, the quiz x discrepancy interaction was no longer significant ($B = .34, t(191) = 1.72, p = .09$). The indirect pathway had an estimated coefficient of .20 with a 95% confidence interval that did not include 0 (.03, .43). These findings indicate that desire for improvement drives the effect of the quiz x discrepancy interaction on instrumentality.

1.8.3 Discussion

These results support the prediction that more aspirationally discrepant individuals remain engaged in the pursuit of their fashion expertise goal and see the fashion-related products as helping them achieve this goal when the rate of progress is perceived as acceptably high, but not when it is too low. Specifically, in the easy quiz condition, high aspirational discrepancy increased motivation and perceived prop instrumentality, yet this effect disappeared when the quiz was hard and hence the rate of progress was perceived to be slower (H3, H4). I find that motivation, or the desire to improve, mediates the interaction
of aspirational discrepancy and perceived goal progress on perceptions of prop instrumentality (H5). Importantly, this study supports the notion that increased perceptions of prop instrumentality are motivational consequences of a desire to reduce an aspirational discrepancy.

To this point, I have been presenting participants with high-end products that are goal-compatible, that is, that are either explicitly described or implicitly perceived as associated with aspirational goals. However, because I have not contrasted these with goal-incompatible products, or even low-compatibility products, I cannot rule out the possibility that highly discrepant individuals assess the perceived instrumentality of all products to be greater. It is possible that more discrepant individuals may feel threatened and seek solace through the value of all material objects. In study 4, I look at both high- and low end-products to rule out this notion and to further demonstrate that aspirational discrepancy influences how people differentiate between goal-compatible and incompatible products.

1.9 Study 4: Looking Good, Feeling Good

In study 4, I test H6, predicting that aspirational discrepancy should interact with product goal-compatibility such that a larger discrepancy should increase the perceived instrumentality of a high (vs. low) compatibility product. Study 4 also serves as a stimulus generation task for study 5, in which I examine the effects of these products on performance.
1.9.1 Method

Participants and design. Seventy students from a southeastern university participated in this 2 (aspirational discrepancy: high vs. low, measured) x 2 (goal compatibility: high vs. low, manipulated) between-subjects experiment. Participants arrived to the lab and were informed that they would be participating in two separate studies.

Aspirational discrepancy. In an ostensible “individual differences” questionnaire, participants were presented with 6 focal traits (entrepreneurial, self-sufficient, professionally successful, competent, hard working, socially adept and business minded) and rated the extent to which each trait described them now and the extent to which they would like the trait to describe them in the future. The aspirational discrepancy measure was created in the same manner as study 3 by subtracting the current from ideal ratings and forming an index ($\alpha=.70$). Upon completing the first set of trait measures, participants were handed either a black leather padfolio (high goal-compatibility product) or a black spiral notebook (low goal-compatibility product) and a second “product evaluation” questionnaire by the experimenter. Because a leather padfolio is considered the “typical” product used for interviews at this institution, this was considered the high-compatibility product, while the spiral notebook was presented as the low-compatibility product.

Prop instrumentality. Participants answered six prop instrumentality questions concerning how using the product would affect their job interviewing effectiveness. They rated the extent to which the product would (1) improve interviewer evaluations, 2) be
noticed by the interviewer (both anchored at Not at all=1, Very much so=7) and the extent to which the product would make them (3) appear professional, 4) appear authentic, (5) feel professional and (6) feel authentic; (all anchored at not at all authentic / professional=1, Very authentic / professional=7) ($\alpha=.84$).

1.9.2 Results

H6 predicted that increased aspirational discrepancy in the business domain would increase differences in the instrumentality of the (high compatibility) padfolio relative to the (low compatibility) spiral notebook. To test this prediction, I again conducted an aspirational discrepancy (continuous) x 2 (goal compatibility of product: low vs. high) regression analysis.

*Prop instrumentality.* There was no main effect of aspirational discrepancy on instrumentality ($B=-.14, t(66)=-.89, p=.38$). There was a main effect of product ($B=1.68, t(66)=8.32, p<.0001$), whereby the padfolio increased perceived prop instrumentality relative to the notebook. This main effect was qualified by the predicted (H6) aspirational discrepancy x goal compatibility interaction ($B=.49, t(66)=2.07, p<.05$). A simple slopes analysis examining the effect of discrepancy at each level of the goal-relevant product (high vs. low compatibility) revealed that for participants using the (high-compatibility) padfolio, there was a significant effect of discrepancy ($B=.34, t(66)=2.03, p<.04$) such that as aspirational discrepancy increased, perceived prop instrumentality increased. For participants using the (low-compatibility) notebook, there was an opposite directional effect ($B=-.14, t(66)=-.89,$
such that as aspirational discrepancy increased, perceived prop instrumentality decreased. A spotlight analysis revealed that for more aspirationally discrepant individuals, the padfolio increased prop instrumentality relative to the notebook ($B=2.08$, $t(66)=8.07$, $p<.0001$). For less discrepant individuals, the padfolio also significantly increased prop instrumentality relative to the notebook ($B=1.27$, $t(66)=4.23$, $p<.05$). However, consistent with H6, this difference was significantly smaller, as evidenced by the significant discrepancy x goal compatibility interaction. See Figure 6.

Figure 6: Study 4 Results, Prop instrumentality in interview as a function of aspirational discrepancy and prop compatibility.

1.9.3 Discussion

This study replicates the finding that greater aspirational discrepancy increases the perceived instrumentality of a symbolic prop and rules out the possibility that more discrepant consumers increase the perceived instrumentalities of all products. While
individuals with both large and small aspirational discrepancies rated prop instrumentality as being greater for the padfolio relative to the notebook, this is likely due to the fact that interviewing with a leather padfolio is recognized as the norm for this population.

Importantly, supporting H6, the significant discrepancy x goal compatibility interaction on prop instrumentality shows that the difference in instrumentality between the two products for more aspirationally discrepant individuals is greater relative to that for less discrepant individuals.

Across the previous studies, I have examined how aspirational discrepancy impacts perceptions of prop instrumentality and demonstrated that more discrepant individuals have higher expectations of the efficacy of goal-relevant props. I next examine how these high instrumentality products may actually influence performance in goal-relevant tasks. One could imagine that greater discrepancy could increase perceptions of embodying the aspired identity, leading to greater motivation and performance. Alternatively, greater discrepancy could lead to slacking (i.e., “I already look the part, so I may not need to work as hard). Finally, the use of a symbolic prop under greater discrepancy may elicit perceptions that one is not living up the identity and should hence reduce effort toward goal pursuit. In the next two studies, I demonstrate that, contrary to consumer anticipations, as expressed by their assessments of prop instrumentality, using symbolic props in goal pursuit may have negative consequences on self-perceptions and behavior for those consumers who are far from their goals. These negative consequences are most consistent
with the notion that product use makes more salient the mismatch between the desired and actual identity and the notion that one is not living up to the identity.

1.10 Study 5: The Clothes May Make the Man Lazier

In this study, I examine the impact of symbolic props on performance. I propose that the experience of using a high end product, in light of individuals’ greater aspirational discrepancy, will elicit contrast, reducing identity-related self-perceptions and effort at an identity-related task. As a result, as described by H8, I predict that aspirational discrepancy should interact with prop goal compatibility such that more aspirationally discrepant individuals will be more likely to reduce their effort on a job-related task in which they use the high (vs. low) compatibility prop. I test this prediction and examine behavior using a performance effort measure. In Study 6, I test H7 and H9 to examine the underlying process further.

1.10.1 Method

Participants and design. Forty-eight students from a southeastern university participated in this 2 (aspirational discrepancy: high vs. low, measured) x 2 (goal compatibility of product: high vs. low, manipulated) between-subjects experiment.

Procedure. The study used the same discrepancy measures and products as study 3, but these questions were completed in the context of a set of “employability” studies. After completing the initial discrepancy measures ($\alpha=0.75$) in an ostensibly separate study, participants were handed a padfolio or notebook for use in the next employability task in a
separate, “Job Incubation” room. Participants walked with their product to a separate room that was 3 minutes away. This public walk was done so that participants could feel a certain sense of consumption and ownership over the product assigned to them, and so that they could observe others and others could observe them. Once they arrived, they sat down at a station of laptop computers and placed the padfolio / notepad next to them. They were then told they would be completing a concentration task which had been shown to be strongly correlated with a host of employment factors such as professional success, job status and income. Individuals were instructed to press the letters X and Z simultaneously as many times as possible over five minutes to accrue points. Greater point totals were associated with higher concentration abilities and hence higher future professional success. This fictitious task served as a highly sensitive measure of sheer effort and is based on a similar task used to measure the level of effort an individual is motivated to exert (Ariely, Bracha, and Meier 2009). Finally, participants completed a filler task on the padfolio/notebook and were thanked, debriefed and compensated.

1.10.2 Results

H8 predicted that aspirational discrepancy should interact with product goal compatibility such that more discrepant individuals would be more likely to reduce their effort on the job-related task in when using a high (vs. low) compatibility product. I test these predictions using the same regression analysis as study 4.
Performance on employability task. There was a directional main effect of aspirational discrepancy, whereby more aspirationally discrepant individuals worked harder at the keypress task than less discrepant individuals ($B=41.9, t(44)=1.33, p=.19$). There was also a marginal effect of product, whereby the padfolio led to reduced effort on the keypress task relative to the notebook ($B=-69.4, t(44)=-1.80, p<.08$). Supporting H8, this effect was qualified by the predicted discrepancy x goal compatibility interaction ($B=-109.35, t(44)=-2.54, p<.02$). A simple slopes analysis revealed that for participants using the padfolio, greater aspirational discrepancy led to reduced effort on the clicking task ($B=-67.4, t(44)=-2.29, p<.03$). For participants using the notebook, however, greater discrepancy led to directionally increased effort ($B=41.9, t(44)=-1.33, p<.20$). As predicted, a spotlight analysis revealed that for high discrepancy individuals, using the padfolio significantly decreased effort relative to the notebook ($B=-167.17, t(44)=-3.19, p<.003$). For low discrepancy individuals, there was no difference in effort based on which product was used in the task ($B=58.4, t(44)=0.50, p=.62$). See Figure 7.
Figure 7: Study 5 Results, Keypress performance in identity-relevant task as a function of aspirational discrepancy and prop compatibility.

1.10.3 Discussion

Taken together with the results of study 4, this study suggests that there is a negative relationship between aspirational discrepancy and effort on goal-related tasks when instrumental props are being used. However, it is unclear from this study whether the reduction in effort observed is due to more discrepant individuals feeling greater self-perceptions of embodying the identity by having the instrumental prop, leading to a licensing or balancing effect (Fishbach and Dhar 2005; Koo and Fishbach 2008; Zhang, Fishbach, and Dhar 2008) where they no longer feel they need to put forth as much effort, or if it stems from perceptions that they may not actually “have what it takes,” leading to more negative self-perceptions and a reduction in effort. In study 6, I examine such self-
perceptions and subsequent goal commitment to gain greater insight into the mechanism for this effect.

1.11 Study 6: Contrast Through Consumption

In study 6, I return to the fashion domain to examine how use of a designer bag may affect identity-related self-perceptions of in addition to effort on an identity-related task. Study 6 employs a true control by comparing the use of a high end designer bag to use of no bag. This is a more realistic comparison, as individuals with identity desires typically choose whether or not to purchase symbolic props, as opposed to whether to choose more goal-incompatible products as substitutes. In addition, to rule out that the effects observed in study 5 were due to the participants’ awareness that others were using a lower-end product (i.e., the notebook), in study 6 the use of the product was not observed by other participants.

1.11.1 Method

Participants and design. Forty-eight female participants (\(M_{\text{age}}=21.9\)) from a southeastern university participated in this 2 (aspirational discrepancy: high vs. low, measured) x 2 (bag: high-end Kate Spade bag vs. no bag) design. This study was advertised as fashion-oriented in order to attract females interested in this identity domain.

Procedure. Participants arrived at the lab and were informed that they were going to do several tasks related to fashion. Aspirational discrepancy was again measured and participants rated the extent to which 5 fashion traits described them now and the extent to
which they wanted these traits to describe them in the future ($\alpha=.78$). These were the same traits used to measure fashion discrepancy in study 3. Participants were next told that the study would focus on identifying signature style and were given a brief description of what constituted signature style (as in study 1).

**Bag selection.** Following the passage, half of participants (those in the bag condition) were taken to a separate room in which there were 7 distinct Kate Spade handbags on display. This brand had been previously pretested to be high in prestige among these undergraduate female students. Participants were specifically told to pick one of the seven bags that they felt most reflected their signature style. This was done in order to ensure that individuals were using a bag that they found appealing and that they felt would be consistent with their fashion goals.

**Prop instrumentality.** Upon choosing the bag they felt most reflected their signature style, participants in the bag condition completed a product evaluation in which they answered questions about how effective the bag would be in helping them become more fashionable. Participants rated how high-status and fashionable they thought they would appear using the bag, and how much the bag would improve their confidence in their signature style (Not at all=1, Very much so=7) ($\alpha=.85$).

**Purchase likelihood.** Participants also rated how likely they were to purchase the bag if they saw it in a store (Not at all likely=1, Very likely=7).
In order to maintain consistency in timing and task-switching, the other half of participants (those in the non-bag condition) were given a neutral scrambled sentence task to complete.

_Bag use._ Participants were then told by the experimenter that they had completed the first half of the tasks. Because the study was a bit long, to break up the tasks, they were going to take a short walk down the hall to the cafeteria and return. This walk took about 3-5 minutes. Participants in the bag conditions were told to bring the bag with them to get a sense of what it might be like to own it. Participants in the non-bag conditions walked without any product or personal item. Participants were run one at a time such that each participant walked independently (i.e., no two participants were walking at the same time). This was done so as to limit the possible observers to individuals who were not in the study and who would likely assume that the participant using the bag in fact owned that bag.

_Effort on the fashion-related task._ Participants returned to the lab after the walk. Those carrying a bag returned it to the experimenter. Participants were told that they would now commence the next set of signature style tasks. The first (and focal) task was titled, “Spot that Style” with the instructions:

“A good way to hone and identify your signature style is to observe the styles of others. We are going to present you with three separate ‘looks’ and ask you to tell us how you would describe each person’s personal style. If you like, you may also comment on what parts of each person’s outfit you like or dislike, or even how you might change the outfit.

The more thorough you are, the greater you will progress in identifying your signature style. You can spend as much time as you like on the task.”
Participants were then presented with images of 3 young women and given space to critique each image. The computer recorded both the total amount they wrote and how long they spent on the task.

Self-perceptions of fashionability. To understand participants’ self-perceptions of their own fashionability, I next asked them to rate how they felt about themselves at the present moment on a variety of dimensions. While the two focal scales were fashion related (clueless about fashion=1, fashion and style savvy=7/ traditional=1, fashion-forward=7) (r=.45, p<.05), there were 5 unrelated filler items throughout (e.g., unhealthy, healthy / serious, funny / unfriendly, friendly) so as to elicit spontaneous self-perceptions and take the focus away from the previous fashion-related tasks and questions (e.g., the discrepancy measure). In this manner, I could identify how use of the product shaped their self-perceptions on dimensions associated with the identity and examine how this related to their behavior.

Post-task perceptions of discrepancy. A separate question explicitly examining people’s perceived distance from their goal following the fashion task asked participants how far they felt from arriving at their signature style (Very far=1, Very close=7).

Covariate. Following these questions, to control for different perceptions of the bag based on ownership, participants were asked if they currently owned a Kate Spade bag (yes=1, no=0). There were no effects of the independent variables on reported ownership. Participants were then thanked, debriefed and compensated.
1.11.2 Results

*Anticipated prop instrumentality.* A correlation analysis for just the women in the bag condition revealed that when rating the bag prior to use, women who were more discrepant from their fashion goals felt that the bag they chose made them appear more fashionable, high-status and confident \((r=.44, p<.05)\).

*Purchase likelihood.* A second correlation analysis for just the women in the bag condition revealed that when rating the bag prior to use, women who felt more discrepant from their fashion goals would be more likely to purchase the bag if they saw it in a store \((r=.52, p<.03)\).

*Performance on fashion task.* The amount of time spent on the signature style task along with the number of words used in the response were standardized and combined to form an index of effort \((r=.73, p<.05)\). A regression analysis revealed that more aspirationally discrepant individuals worked marginally harder at the style task than less discrepant individuals \((B=.41, t(43) =1.90, p=.06)\). There was also a directional effect of product, whereby using the designer bag led to reduced effort on the keypress task relative to not using a bag \((B=-.34, t(43) =-1.38, p=.18)\). Supporting H8, this effect was qualified by the predicted discrepancy x goal compatibility interaction \((B=-.78, t(43) =-2.53, p<.02)\). A simple slopes analysis revealed that at baseline, for participants walking without the designer bag, greater discrepancy led to marginally increased effort \((B=.41, t(43) =1.90, p=.06)\), consistent with the overall notion that greater discrepancy should lead to greater motivation. For
participants walking with the designer bag, however, greater aspirational discrepancy led to marginally reduced effort on the fashion task ($B=-.37$, $t(43)=-1.70, p<.10$). As predicted, a spotlight analysis revealed that for high discrepancy individuals, using the designer bag decreased effort relative to no bag ($B=-1.01$, $t(43)=-2.78, p<.01$). For low discrepancy individuals, there was no difference in effort based on which product was used ($B=.30$, $t(43)=0.85, p=.39$). See Figure 8.

![Figure 8: Study 6 Results, Fashion effort in identity-relevant task as a function of aspirational discrepancy and prop use.](image)

**Figure 8: Study 6 Results, Fashion effort in identity-relevant task as a function of aspirational discrepancy and prop use.**

*Self-perceptions following effort task.* There was only a directional main effect of aspirational discrepancy on post-task self-perceptions of fashionability, ($B=.40$, $t(43)=1.63$, $p=.11$), and was there was not a main effect of designer bag use, $t(43)<1$, ns. There was a significant discrepancy x bag interaction ($B=-.94$, $t(43)=-2.67, p<.01$). A simple slopes analysis revealed that at baseline, for participants not using the designer bag, there was
A directional effect of aspirational discrepancy on post-task self-perceptions, \((B=.40, t(43) =1.63, p=.11)\) whereby increased discrepancy increased post-task perceived fashionability. For participants using the designer bag, however, increased discrepancy led to decreased post-task perceived fashionability \((B=-.54, t(43) =-2.16, p<.05)\). A spotlight analysis revealed that, as predicted in H7, for high discrepancy individuals, the designer bag significantly decreased self-perceptions of fashionability relative to the no-bag conditions \((B=-1.05, t(43) =-2.52, p<.02)\). For low discrepancy individuals, there was not a significant difference in post-task self-perceptions of fashionability across bag conditions \((B=.54, t(43) =1.30, p=.20)\). See Figure 9.

**Figure 9: Study 6 Results, Fashion-related self-perceptions in identity-relevant task as a function of aspirational discrepancy and prop use.**

*Perceptions of discrepancy following effort task.* There were no main effects of aspirational discrepancy or bag use on participants’ post-task perceived distance from their
signature style goals ($t_s<1$), nor was there a significant discrepancy x bag interaction, $B=-.17$, $t(43)=-.45$, $p=.66$. Thus, it appears that identity-related self-perceptions are distinct from overall perceptions of discrepancy from an identity goal.

*Mediated Moderation Analysis.* Next, I tested for mediated moderation as previously described, examining whether self-perceptions of fashionability mediated the effect of the bag x discrepancy interaction on the effort exerted on the fashion task (H9). This analysis did not reveal a significant mediation of the effect of the bag x discrepancy interaction on effort by self-perceptions of fashionability. The bag x discrepancy interaction affected effort ($B=-.78$, $t(43)=-2.53$, $p<.02$) and self-perceptions of fashionability ($B=-.94$, $t(43)=-2.65$, $p<.02$). Controlling for self-perceptions, the bag x discrepancy interaction on effort was reduced ($B=-.71$, $t(42)=-2.12$, $p<.05$), though not significantly. The indirect pathway had an estimated coefficient of -.07 with a 95% confidence interval that included 0 (-.37, .16). Thus, identity-related self-perceptions, while demonstrating a similar pattern as the behavioral result, are not the main driver of the effect of the bag x discrepancy interaction on effort in this study. It is likely that there is either a preceding or intervening driver or separate driver that reduces effort for more discrepant individuals. I discuss one possibility in the next section.

### 1.11.3 Discussion

Consistent with previous instrumentality results, individuals who perceived they were more discrepant from their fashion goals anticipated greater instrumentality from the designer bag and reported greater likelihood of buying the bag in a store. Despite these
anticipations, however, using a high end product when feeling discrepant from your goals actually reduces effort on a related goal-relevant task, replicating S5 with a new task in a new identity domain. Moreover, I demonstrate that it is not that these discrepant individuals feel more fashionable due to the product and hence feel licensed to slack, but, consistent with H7, that the use of the bag reduces their perceptions of similarity to their aspired identity, accompanying their reduced effort on the task.

Thus, this study demonstrates that symbolic product use influences both self-perceptions and performance negatively, though the process by which this takes place is not yet clear. Given the negative self-perceptions results, however, the reduction in effort is unlikely to be due to a goal balancing or licensing mechanism (Fishbach and Dhar 2005, 2006), but rather that participants may be giving up or disengaging from goal pursuit altogether. As described earlier, work on self-regulation and goal pursuit suggests that individuals may disengage when outcome expectancies (e.g., Carver and Scheier 1981), or the perceived likelihood of arriving at their goal, are unfavorable. Thus, it is possible that negative self-perceptions after using a bag may lead to unfavorable expectancies of goal attainment (“Maybe this goal isn’t for me if even this high end bag doesn’t make me feel fashionable),” shaking goal engagement and turning off motivation. This could operate through perceptions of an insufficient rate of progress or reduced self-efficacy.
Post-hoc correlative analyses across bag conditions supported the notion that the reduction in effort may be due to goal disengagement that occurs in the presence of the symbolic prop. Specifically, when there was no bag use, there was not a significant relationship between self-perceptions and the rate of goal progress \((r=0.25, p=0.23)\), however with bag use there was a significant relationship \((r=0.63, p<0.001)\) between post-task self-perceptions and the rate of goal progress such that individuals who felt lower post-task self-perceptions also felt goal progress was slower. This lack of goal progress could decrease engagement in goal pursuit, reducing motivation or one’s desire to improve, and hence limit effort. Thus, further studies should test the specific downstream effects of these negative self-perceptions on factors related to goal engagement with increased power and sensitivity.

Importantly, this study solidifies the notion that more discrepant individuals are at a significant disadvantage: they desire more strongly the products that will make them feel worse about themselves, and they reduce their effort on goal-related tasks. This study also highlights the power of product use. While more discrepant individuals rated the bag they chose as helping them to appear more fashionable, once they actually experienced the bag (walking down the hall with it as though it was their own), they shifted their own perceptions of fashionability downward. Thus, it appears that product use can lead to internal feedback that may change self-perceptions.
1.12 General Discussion

Across six studies, with both manipulated and measured aspirational discrepancy, I demonstrate that a person’s perceived discrepancy between his current and hoped-for self, or his aspirational discrepancy, has important consequences for perceptions of prop instrumentality and for behaviors with these symbolic props. In the pilot study, I show that discrepancy shapes the perceptions of identity-related products. In study 1, I demonstrate that as people feel further from their hoped-for selves, they view symbolic products as increasingly instrumental in helping them arrive at their aspirational goals. In study 2, I demonstrate that this effect is egocentric, only holding when individuals perceive that they themselves are aspirationally discrepant and not merely when they are observing another who is discrepant from his goals. In study 3, I demonstrate the mediating role of motivation and present the boundary condition that the impact of discrepancy on prop instrumentality only holds when the perceived rate of goal progress is sufficiently high. In study 4, I find that highly discrepant individuals are more likely to differentiate goal-compatible products from non-compatible products relative to less discrepant individuals. In study 5, I shift focus to the consequences of using symbolic props in goal-relevant tasks, revealing the ironic effect whereby high discrepancy individuals, despite having heightened anticipation of the benefits of a prop, actually perform worse when using the prop. In study 6, I demonstrate that this product use also leads to reduced self-perceptions of embodying the identity, which accompanies their reduction in effort.
1.12.1 Contributions to Theory

This research unites an examination of the instrumentality ascribed to products based on aspirational discrepancy with an examination of how instrumental products impact performance when used in goal-relevant tasks. While work in symbolic self-completion has looked at the desire to acquire symbolic props as alternate identity signals (Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982) and work on choice valuation has examined the impact of goal activation on choice (Brendl and Markman 2000; Brendl, Markman and Messner 2003), limited attention has been given to consumers’ beliefs about a symbolic product’s instrumentality or to how actual product use may influence behavior. The aspirational goal pursuit framework that I present integrates these two elements into a framework in which discrepancies have distinct influences on instrumentality and performance.

The focus on aspirational goals sheds insight into what types of goal contexts would elicit more self-regulation or goal-gradient effects on goal pursuit. Specifically, self-discrepancy and self-regulation theories predict that being further from one’s goals increases motivation toward the end state (e.g., Duval et al. 1992; Duval and Wicklund 1972; Fishbach and Dhar 2006; Higgins 1987; Locke and Latham 2002; Wicklund and Gollwitzer 1982). However, goal gradient work demonstrates that feelings of proximity to a goal can be motivating (Hull 1932; Kivetz, Urminsky, and Zheng 2006; Nunes and Drèze 2006). This work would suggest that reduced discrepancy, or feeling closer to one’s aspired identity goals, would actually increase perceptions of prop instrumentality. I believe that this may
be explained by the nature of the goals presented. Consistent with work by Koo and Fishbach on climbing the goal ladder (2010), as individuals move closer to an aspired goal endpoint and think about the progress they have left to make, they tend to shift their goals upwards. In this sense, I believe that in an aspirational discrepancy context, individuals don’t have the same notion of proximity (since the endpoint is always changing) as they would with a discrete endpoint, which is why we see a predominant self-regulatory effect. Moreover, the actions required to arrive at an identity goal are less concrete and certain than those typically explored in goal gradient research (e.g., purchasing 12 coffees to get a free coffee). It is possible that identity contexts with more concrete endpoints and certainty around the actions necessary to arrive at the endpoint are more likely to reveal a goal gradient pattern of motivation and instrumentality.

The explicit focus on discrepancy afforded by examining aspirational goals also contributes to the literature on symbolic self-completion and work on shaken senses of self (e.g., Gao et al. 2008). The present studies demonstrate that aspirationally discrepant individuals consume symbolic products not simply to “claim” identity goal attainment, as is sometimes implied by self-completion theory, nor merely to behave self-goal consistently, as might be inferred by work on self-threat. Instead, these individuals’ increased aspirational discrepancy enhances the perception that this specific product acquisition can actually improve their performance, bringing them closer to their goals and thus allowing for true aspired-to self attainment.
This work contributes to limited research on how actual product use (consumption) affects consumers. While a great deal of research has focused on how being exposed to individuals, objects or brands may impact self-evaluations and behavior, this work demonstrates that the experience of using a product, particularly in contexts where one’s identity self-discrepancies are made salient, is quite distinct from simply thinking about or rating a product. In fact, the use of a product that is associated with an identity endpoint can have unanticipated negative consequences for those who feel further from their goals.

1.12.2 Implications for Consumer Welfare

While I believe that the ironic nature of the results is quite interesting, it also presents a challenge for consumer welfare. Aspirational identity goals are not grounded in social experience, so they are particularly malleable and easily affected by motivation. Moreover, because these goals are chronically accessible due to their frequent and committed pursuit (Bargh 1990), the connections between symbolic props and their perceived instrumentality are often ingrained. As a result, consumers who lack true experience with an aspired identity and the knowledge of what is necessary to achieve it may overvalue products that are merely associated with that identity and would likely to fall prey to schemes or products that actually have no value for goal-pursuit and are falsely framed as being goal-relevant. Finally, marketers should be aware of the potential impact that their products may have on consumer self-perceptions and performance. Marketing campaigns often frame products as being highly instrumental to aspirational goal
attainment. However, to the extent that more aspirationally discrepant individuals choose to value and consume these products, they may also reduce their effort on actual goal attainment and feel worse about their standing regarding that identity in doing so.

1.12.3 Possibilities for Future Research

This work also informs possibilities for research of the intriguing, though understudied, consumer “poseur” phenomenon, whereby individuals may use attire or accoutrements signaling status or identity attainment to “pass” as having arrived at an identity, knowing that the signal is inauthentic. Gino and colleagues’ work (2010) examines this phenomenon with counterfeit products, finding that the conflict between the outward signal of a high prestige product and the self-signal that one is using a fake product causes individuals to feel inauthentic and drives inauthentic behavior. In this sense, individuals are trading off “looking the part” and being seen as high status or high prestige for more negative self-perceptions. The present research suggests that this type of effect may take place not simply with products branded as negative or unethical, such as counterfeit products, but more generally in contexts in which consumers feel that there is an inconsistency or mismatch between the identity signal being sent to others and their current identity perception. Further research could examine what types of contexts would be more likely to lead to contrast for poseurs, or any individuals using symbolic props knowing that they themselves are not representative of the identity they are portraying.
In addition, while I observe a negative impact of product use for discrepant consumers, further studies should look at the contexts in which products may positively affect effort and self-perceptions. Across the product use studies, I manipulated or measured people’s self-discrepancies and then had them rate or use a symbolic prop. In this sense, the level of discrepancy or dissimilarity from the identity was salient when they began to use the product, which could change internal feedback they may have experienced (e.g., “I really can’t pull this off”). Future research could examine the effects of discrepancy on behavior when the manipulation or measurement of discrepancy is separate from produce use, and so discrepancy is less salient and likely to affect behavior. It is possible that the greater motivation of those self-discrepant individuals can actually improve performance, functioning as a placebo, if they are not reminded of how far they are from their goals immediately prior to using the product.

1.12.4 Conclusion

This dissertation suggests that individuals’ aspirational discrepancies have important consequences for how they perceive goal-relevant props as well as how susceptible they are to reduce their efforts when using these props. As reflected by my findings, the pursuit of aspirational goals through consumption can be quite illusory. In particular, aspirationally discrepant individuals’ strong beliefs that the clothes do make the man may cause them to choose products that are counterproductive to goal pursuit. As a
result, they not only follow a misguided belief, but ultimately feel and become less a man than they desired.
Appendix A: Text for Old Spice Commercial

“Hello, ladies, look at your man, now back to me, now back at your man, now back to me. Sadly, he isn’t me, but if he stopped using ladies scented body wash and switched to Old Spice, he could smell like he’s me. Look down, back up, where are you? You’re on a boat with the man your man could smell like. What’s in your hand, back at me. I have it, it’s an oyster with two tickets to that thing you love. Look again, the tickets are now diamonds. Anything is possible when your man smells like Old Spice and not a lady. I’m on a horse. (‘Smell like a man, man.’ Logo emerges)
Appendix B: Study 1 Fashion Self-Improvement Books

This humorous and practical guide offers tips on how to clean out the closet, find personal, "signature styles" that make stylish dressing simple and effective, and save money while clothes shopping. The authors give tips on how to pare down and make your clothes work for you! By following the suggestions given you will organize your closets, spend less money, and look better. They also give tips on caring for your clothes. The style of the book is easy and breezy. And it's pocket-sized, easy to tote in your bag.

Inspired Style will teach you how to create and enhance your best possible style! You’ll find the key ingredients to help you understand and define your personal style, which is so much more than clothes and fashion. Several chapters will lead you on a journey of self-discovery about who you are and what makes you such a unique person. Then use
the rest of the book to quickly rev up your style, thanks to the twenty-one top experts who have come together to give you the most innovative image strategies they know!
Appendix C: Study 2 Discrepancy Manipulation

Discrepancy Manipulation: Participants either saw a scenario describing a situation in which the golfer was less discrepant (or more discrepant) from his aspirational goals (three of these were presented in a row for different aspects of golf).

The information was presented as being “Your feedback” or “Alan’s Feedback.”

**Low Discrepancy Condition**

YOU: 60% of greens

Progress left to go

Goal = 70% of greens in regulation

First-time golfer: 5% of greens

Accomplished golfer: 70% of greens

**High Discrepancy Condition**

YOU: 10% of greens

Progress left to go

Goal = 70% of greens in regulation

First-time golfer: 5% of greens

Accomplished golfer: 70% of greens
References


Biography

Luz-Adriana Samper Daza was born in Manchester, CT on July 11, 1980. She received a B.A. in Biological Basis of Behavior from the University of Pennsylvania in 2002 and began attending Duke University for her PhD in 2005. She has published “Boundary Conditions on Unconscious Thought in Complex Decision Making” (2008) in Psychological Science, along with co-authors John W. Payne, James R. Bettman and Mary Frances Luce. She is a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, Delta Chapter. She has received an honorable mention in the Society for Consumer Psychology’s 2011 Dissertation Competition and is also a recipient of the American Marketing Association Foundation’s “Valuing Diversity” Scholarship.