

CAN PURCHASES MAKE US HAPPIER? PERHAPS, IF WE TELL OTHERS  
ABOUT THEM

by

Wilson Bastos

---

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

WITH A MAJOR IN MARKETING

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2013

**THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
GRADUATE COLLEGE**

As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Wilson Bastos, titled Can Purchases Make Us Happier? Perhaps, If We Tell Others about Them and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sidney Levy Date: May 1, 2013

\_\_\_\_\_  
Narayan Janakiraman Date: May 1, 2013

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeff Stone Date: May 1, 2013

\_\_\_\_\_  
Matthias Mehl Date: May 1, 2013

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dissertation Director: Merrie Brucks Date: May 1, 2013

### **STATEMENT BY AUTHOR**

This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this dissertation are allowable without special permission, provided that an accurate acknowledgment of the source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the author.

SIGNED: Wilson Bastos

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

What a journey this was! As in any complex journey, the completion of this one was made possible by the contribution and support I received from a very large number of individuals. I thank my friends Jaci Pereira, Ataide Oliveira, Eduardo Cavalcante, Fernanda Avezum, and Edgard Avezum who helped me believe I would be able to enter a PhD program. I am also grateful to Carol Lynn Nute, David Nute, Sonia Monga, L.J. Shrum, Tina Lowrey, and John McCray for writing letters of recommendation and giving me advice on the application process.

During the PhD program, the journey was made pleasant and interesting by my peers, among whom are Jurui Zhang, Lizz Focella, Shan Yu, Michelle Weinberger, Rebecca Trump, Paul Connel, and various other smart and helpful students. I give a special thanks to my dear friend Sangeetha Venkataramani—wow, we really supported each other during the program! My experience as a PhD student also benefited greatly from the attention I received from the marketing professors at the University of Arizona. I am specially grateful to Linda Price, Yong Liu, Mrinal Ghosh, and Robert Lusch.

The guidance I received from my PhD committee is invaluable. Much of my learning is a result of the dedication of Narayan Janakiraman, Matthias Mehl, and Jeff Stone. Also, my committee chair, Merrie Brucks, tirelessly pushed me, challenged me, corrected me, and celebrated with me. What an amazing advisor and friend. Talking about friend, Sidney Levy's friendship is one of the most valuable gifts I gained in this journey. Sidney, thank you for sharing with me your immense knowledge and your positive way of seeing life. You are more than special to me.

Finally, I thank my family for giving me their unconditional support and love. My mother Socorro is my role model. My father Assis is my source of inspiration. My sister Tania provides me true love. My wife Fernanda is my everyday strength and happiness.

I feel very fortunate for having you all in my life.

Thank you!

## **DEDICATION**

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother (Socorro Moreira), father (Assis Sales), sister (Tania Sales), and wife (Fernanda Rios). They are the reason of my efforts and persistence.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: HAPPINESS.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Happiness.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Happiness versus Satisfaction.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Similarities.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Distinctions.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Conceptualization.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Measure ments.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Empirical Evidence.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Happiness’ Relevance: Why is Happiness Important</b>	
<b>to Society and Consumer Research?.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Marketing—A Provider of Value (and Happiness).....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Increasing Happiness versus Reducing Unhappiness.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>Happiness Worldwide.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Sources of Happiness.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Genetics.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Personality Traits.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Life Circumstances.....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Behaviors.....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Purchases and Happiness.....</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: MATERIAL VERSUS EXPERIENTIAL PURCHASES</b>	
<b>AND PRODUCT VERSUS SERVICE.....</b>	<b>49</b>

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued***

<b>The Distinctions between Products and Services.....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Service-Dominant Logic Challenges the Distinction</b>	
<b>between Products and Services.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>My View.....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>A Comparison of Two Literatures: Product/Service</b>	
<b>and Material/Experiential Purchases.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Central Constructs Are Endpoints of a Continuum.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Tangibility.....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Customer-Provider Interactions.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Provider versus Customer's Viewpoint.....</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Conclusions.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SHARING.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>The Sharing Mediation – Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EXPECTED REGARD.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>The Expected Regard Mediation – Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6: EXPERIMENTS 1-4.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Experiment 1.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Procedures.....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Assessment of Sharing.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Assessment of Happiness.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Assessment of Expected Regard.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Assessment of Control Variables.....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Results.....</b>	<b>76</b>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued*

Reliability and Factor Analyses.....	76
Sharing Mediation Analysis.....	77
Expected Regard Mediation Analysis.....	78
Control Variables: Friendship Numbers and Materialism.....	78
Discussion.....	79
Additional Possible Differences between	
Material and Experiential Purchases.....	80
Hedonic versus Utilitarian.....	80
Necessary versus Discretionary Purchases.....	81
Differential Costs.....	81
Uniqueness and Scarcity.....	82
Sociality of Consumption.....	82
Experiment 2.....	84
Procedures.....	85
Results.....	87
Reliability.....	87
Mediation Analyses.....	87
<i>Solo and social analyses.....</i>	88
<i>Sharing mediation analysis.....</i>	88
<i>Expected regard mediation analysis.....</i>	89
<i>Listener's enjoyment analysis.....</i>	90
<i>Solo Analyses.....</i>	90
<i>Sharing mediation analysis.....</i>	90



## TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued*

<i>Expected regard mediation analysis</i> .....	91
<i>Social Analyses</i> .....	91
<i>Sharing mediation analysis</i> .....	91
<i>Expected regard mediation analysis</i> .....	92
<i>Moderated-mediation analysis</i> .....	92
<i>Happiness</i> .....	93
<i>Sharing</i> .....	93
<i>Mediation analysis</i> .....	93
Discussion.....	94
Experiment 3.....	96
Procedures.....	97
Results.....	98
Reliability.....	98
Sharing Mediation Analysis.....	98
Expected Regard Mediation Analysis.....	99
Time of Ownership Analysis.....	100
Discussion.....	100
Long Term versus Short Term.....	104
Experiment 4.....	106
Procedures.....	109
Assessment of Variables of Interest.....	110
Results.....	111

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued***

Reliability.....	111
Happiness.....	111
Sharing.....	112
Moderated-Mediation Analysis. ....	114
Expected Regard.....	116
Moderated-Mediation Analysis.....	117
Discussion.....	120
<b>CHAPTER 7: EXPERIMENTS 5 AND 6.....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Experiment 5.....</b>	<b>122</b>
Procedures.....	122
Results.....	124
Discussion.....	124
<b>Experiment 6.....</b>	<b>125</b>
Methods.....	127
Measures.....	129
Procedures.....	129
Results.....	132
Reliability and Factor Analyses.....	132
Happiness.....	133
Expected Regard.....	133
Discussion.....	134
<b>CHAPTER 8: GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>136</b>

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued***

<b>Summary of Dissertation Findings.....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Mediating Role of Sharing.....</b>	<b>136</b>
<b>Mediating Role of Expected Regard.....</b>	<b>138</b>
<b>Memory and the Recalling of Purchases.....</b>	<b>139</b>
<b>Memory-Related Factors.....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Von Restorff Effect.....</b>	<b>140</b>
<b>Recency Effect. ....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Choice-Supportive Bias.....</b>	<b>141</b>
<b>Retrieval Cues.....</b>	<b>143</b>
<b>Sharing's Effect on Memory.....</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>Time Passed and Memories of Objects versus Experiences.....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Limitations of Present Studies.....</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>Future Research Opportunities.....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Agentic versus Communal Regard.....</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>Individual Characteristics.....</b>	<b>153</b>
<b>Purchase-Related Characteristics.....</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Self-Verification Theory.....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory.....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Happiness and Satisfaction.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>Forms of Sharing.....</b>	<b>162</b>
<b>Sharing of Positive Information about the Self.....</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>Self-Disclosure.....</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>Theoretical Contributions to Happiness and Sharing Literatures.....</b>	<b>170</b>

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS - *Continued***

<b>Implications for Consumers and Marketing Professionals.....</b>	<b>172</b>
<b>Implication to Marketing as a Discipline.....</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: EXPERIMENT 1.....</b>	<b>176</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: EXPERIMENT 2.....</b>	<b>177</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: EXPERIMENT 3.....</b>	<b>178</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: EXPERIMENT 4.....</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: EXPERIMENT 5 .....</b>	<b>181</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: EXPERIMENT 6.....</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>185</b>

**LIST OF FIGURES**

<b>Figure 1.....</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Figure 2.....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Figure 3.....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Figure 4.....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>Figure 5 .....</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Figure 6 .....</b>	<b>117</b>
<b>Figure 7 .....</b>	<b>127</b>

## ABSTRACT

The question of what type of purchase (i.e., experiential vs. material) typically advances more happiness has been answered (Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003). This dissertation employed three different manipulation methods across six studies to investigate what underlies this effect. A consistent pattern of results demonstrated that verbal sharing (i.e., telling others) helps explain the superiority of experiential purchases in advancing happiness. Moreover, I found that people's greater inclination to share about their experiential (vs. material) purchases is driven by their expectation of being more highly regarded by their listeners. Taken together, these findings shed light on a behavioral (i.e., sharing) and psychological process (i.e., expected regard) that help us understand why experiences make people happier than do material objects.

*Keywords:* sharing, happiness, material versus experiential purchases, expected regard

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In a 2011 interview with Charlie Rose, Mark Zuckerberg explained, “I just think there is this core part of people where they want to express things about themselves...It’s just one of the things that I think makes us human.” Often, Zuckerberg’s point is observed in people’s apparently pressing desire to tell others about topics ranging from trivial (e.g., the food one enjoyed during dinner) to important and intimate (e.g., the events taking place during the birth of one’s baby).

Social scientists concur with the idea that sharing—defined here as non-commercial interpersonal communication of information about oneself or about something relevant to oneself—is a core part of human nature as well as a ubiquitous behavior (e.g., Argo, White, and Dahl, 2006). We know for example that most of the time (7 out of 10 days) people share about positive events that happened to them (Gable, Reis, Impett, and Asher, 2004). This high frequency of sharing behavior is easily understandable given the benefits that it generates. Sharing is associated with improved social relationships (Collins and Miller, 1994; Gable, Gonzaga, and Strachman, 2006), stronger memory of the shared event (Langston, 1994), alleviation of stress and tension (Pennebaker, 1985), greater positive affect and well-being (Gable et al., 2004), and increased happiness (Mehl, Vazire, Holleran, and Clack, 2010).

In light of this understanding, the main objective of the present work is to bring sharing to the consumer realm and investigate whether it can assist us in explaining why certain types of purchases are better than others in advancing happiness. Precisely, I posit that sharing constitutes an underlying mechanism in the superiority of experiential purchases (e.g., a movie at the theater) over material purchases (e.g., a new watch) in advancing happiness (Carter and

Gilovich, 2010; Van Boven, 2005; Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003). Consistent with my predictions, results suggest that experiential purchases have higher conversational value than do material purchases and that, as a result of leading to more sharing, they are better at advancing happiness.

Existing works have shown that psychological factors (i.e., adaptation, comparison, regret, and closeness to the self) and an outcome factor resulting from the purchase (i.e., a feeling of social relatedness) help explain the superiority of experiential purchases in advancing happiness. Whereas this stream of research has considerably improved our understanding, the present work provides a significant new contribution to theory by demonstrating that an interpersonal behavioral factor (i.e., sharing) is a critical mediator of that effect. It therefore offers a novel framework that deepens our understanding of why experiences generate more happiness than do material objects.

Further, this work also shows that the superiority of experiences can be witnessed even within the same purchase (experiment 3). That is, results demonstrate that the mere behavior of framing a purchase in experiential (vs. material) terms influences consumers' inclination to share about the purchase, which in turn positively affects happiness. This finding rules out intrinsic differences between material objects and experiences as the source of the effect, and highlights a contribution of my research to practice. Precisely, it illustrates that, by motivating consumers to frame purchases in experiential (vs. material) terms, marketing professionals can influence those consumers' inclination to share and in turn help them obtain more happiness from their purchases. Additionally, I demonstrate that the benefits of sharing are not restricted to experiential purchases (experiment 4). Results show that when people share about their material purchases as much as about their experiential purchases, they draw similar, high levels of



happiness. This work therefore provides informational value also to consumers. It guides them on expenditures (i.e., experiential purchases) and behaviors (i.e., sharing) that will afford them comparatively higher levels of happiness.

Besides establishing sharing's role as a mediator, I take this investigation a step further to provide an answer to the pressing question: Why are people more inclined to share about their experiential than about their material purchases? The sharing literature informs us that whereas information transfer is an important goal, people also share to cast themselves in a positive light in order to gain high regard from others (Goffman, 1974; Wojnicki and Godes, 2008). Moreover, we know that experiential individuals are often seen more favorably than materialistic ones (Van Boven, Campbell, and Gilovich, 2010). In line with this, I hypothesize and find evidence that people share about their experiential (vs. material) purchases more because they expect to be more highly regarded as a result. In other words, expected regard underlines people's higher tendency to tell others about their experiences versus their objects.

This dissertation therefore advances knowledge by examining a mediated-mediation model (Figure 3) whose relations propose that 1) consumers of experiential (vs. material) purchases are more inclined to share about their purchases and, in turn, more likely to draw rewards (i.e., happiness) from doing so (this comprises the sharing mediation), and that 2) those consumers' expectations for how they will be regarded by others explains the difference in inclination to share (this comprises the expected regard mediation). Furthermore, it shows that the benefits of sharing about experiences can be extended to the sharing of objects (experiment 4).

My empirical tests are comprised of six experiments designed to test the proposed model and to address various potential rival explanations. Experiments 1 and 2 used a procedure in

which participants recalled and wrote about a previous purchase they had made. That is followed by self-reports of expected regard (a proposed mediator), sharing (another proposed mediator), and happiness (the proposed DV). Results showed the predicted effects for the sharing mediation and expected regard mediation.

Experiment 3, on the other hand, kept the focal purchase constant and manipulated the ‘material’ versus ‘experiential’ dimension by asking participants to frame the same purchase either in material or experiential terms. Consistent with my predictions, people who framed the purchase in experiential (vs. material) terms showed higher inclination to share, and in turn reported higher levels of happiness.

Next, experiment 4 examined the effect of a cuing manipulation designed to make sharing more salient and, in turn, motivate people to share. As hypothesized, the salience of the sharing behavior affected those ‘who need it the most’. Specifically, participants in the material purchase condition reacted positively to the cuing manipulation. They reported increased levels of sharing and, consequently, higher levels of happiness (as compared to participants cued with unrelated words). On the other hand, participants in the experiential purchase condition, who are naturally highly inclined to share, did not increase sharing nor happiness as a result of being cued with sharing (vs. unrelated topics). Results showed also that sharing’s salience affected material purchasers’ (but not experiential purchasers’) expectation for regard, which explained their increased inclination to share.

Experiment 5, in turn, tested whether people’s higher tendency to share about experiential (vs. material) purchases also occurs when both purchases advance equal levels of happiness. Results were again consistent with predictions. When a material and an experiential purchase advance equivalent levels of happiness, people still prefer to share about the latter.

Finally, experiment 6 tested the proposed model by engaging participants in the actual behavior of sharing. In this experiment I used a 2 (purchase type: material vs. experiential) x 2 (share about: purchase x unrelated) design and, consistent with my predictions, found that participants' happiness was advanced only when they shared about the purchase (vs. unrelated topic). This result demonstrated that sharing is a determinant factor in purchases' ability to advance happiness.

In summary, the results of these six experiments strongly support the proposed model: 1) people's inclination to share more about their experiential (vs. material) purchases, helps explain why they draw more happiness from those purchases; and that 2) people's expectation for being more highly regarded as a result of sharing about experiential (vs. material) purchases helps explain their higher tendency to tell others about their experiential (vs. material) purchases.

In chapter 2, I discuss the definition of happiness, similarities and distinctions between happiness and satisfaction, the relevance of happiness, marketing's role as a provider of value and happiness, the relation between increasing happiness and reducing unhappiness, the level of happiness worldwide, sources of happiness, and the effect of material and experiential purchases on happiness

Chapter 3 deepens the discussion on material versus experiential purchases. It does so by elaborating on how the two purchase types relate to the literature on product versus service. Chapter 4 reviews the sharing literature and introduces hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Next, Chapter 5 offers a discussion on expected regard, the variable responsible for the second proposed mediation. That discussion is followed by the presentation of hypotheses 4, 5, and 6. Chapters 6 and 7 show the six empirical tests designed to test these six hypotheses, as well as five additional hypotheses introduced in experiment 4.

Following these hypotheses tests, this paper proceeds with a general discussion section (Chapter 8), which reviews and elaborates on this dissertation's findings, elaborates on its contributions to the happiness and sharing literatures, discusses implications to consumers, marketers, and marketing as a discipline, evaluates a relevant research stream (e.g., research on memory), acknowledges this work's limitations, and suggests future research avenues.

## CHAPTER 2: HAPPINESS

### Happiness

Happiness has widely been conceptualized in terms of its hedonic and cognitive components. Ryan and Deci (2001) explained that these components derive from two distinct yet overlapping paradigms: hedonism (Kahneman, Diener, and Schwarz, 1999) and eudaimonism (Waterman, 1993).

The hedonic view sees happiness as related to optimal experiences. In general, this perspective argues that happiness comes from the experiencing of pleasures and the avoidance of pain. Its origin dates back to ancient times—341 b.C.—when the philosopher Epicurus claimed that all humans could find a way to happiness, but that they were trying to acquire it from the wrong source (i.e., monetary wealth). According to him, pleasure, not money, is the most important thing in life (Philosophy—Epicurus on Happiness, 2007). Such pleasures can come from bodily sensations (i.e., physical hedonism) as well as from mind realizations (e.g., the achievement of a valued goal) (Diener, Sapyta, and Suh, 1998). Recent happiness research in psychology (e.g., Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003) and in marketing (e.g., Nicolao et al., 2009) has adopted the hedonic views. These studies assume that people seek to maximize happiness by maximizing events associated with pleasure and minimizing those associated with displeasure. These and other studies attempt to tap into three dimensions that, according to the hedonic view, constitute happiness: the presence of positive emotions, the absence of negative emotions (which Diener et al., (1999) called pleasant affect and unpleasant affect, respectively), and life satisfaction.

Differently from the hedonic view, the eudaimonic camp sees happiness as related to self-realization and optimal fulfillment of a person's functions. Aristotle, for instance, criticized the hedonic assumptions by claiming that they depicted humans as mere followers of desires. He claimed that, instead, happiness goes beyond desires to include the pursuit of virtues. Fromm (1978) echoed this view by explaining that the fulfillment of desires leads to momentary pleasures (which may end up being harmful and not leading to happiness). On the other hand, the fulfillment of human functioning leads to human growth. Happiness is achieved when one's life is in accordance with his/her true self, which creates a life characterized by authenticity and intense engagement of one's functions. According to Ryff and Keyes (1995) six dimensions capture the essence of happiness as seen by eudaimonics: positive relatedness, mastery, life purpose, self-acceptance, personal growth, and autonomy.

Empirical evidence (Waterman, 1993) has shown that the hedonic and eudaimonic views correlate strongly; but it has also indicated that the former is closely related to being away from problems and being relaxed, while the latter is closely associated with personal-development and personal-growth, being challenged, employing effort, and achieving self-actualization.

In sum, hedonism argues that happiness is achieved through the pursuit and acquisition of pleasure, while eudaimonism claims that the fulfillment of one's functions and the achievement of personal growth lead to happiness. Eudaimonic followers (e.g., Ryff, Singer, Keyes) oppose hedonism in that pleasure seeking often does not lead to healthy living (i.e., well-being, emotional, and physical health), while hedonism followers (e.g., Diener) oppose eudaimonism by claiming that it lets researchers, instead of people in general, establish what good life means. These two paradigms have co-existed since ancient times and, in my view, they have been more complementary than oppositional to each other.

Consistent with previous material versus experiential purchase research, I adopt the hedonic view of happiness. I thus define happiness as a sense of subjective well-being. It is an overall sense that life is good (Myers, 1992) and that life contains many positive emotions and situations (Ahuvia, 2008).

### **Happiness versus Satisfaction**

Like happiness, satisfaction has long been a topic of research interest. In the field of marketing, specifically, research in consumer satisfaction is considerably more developed than that in consumer happiness. The two are sometimes thought as conceptually similar, so this section discusses the conceptual overlap and also important distinctions between happiness and satisfaction. I first elaborate on similarities related to conceptualization and measurement. Next, I focus on 1) conceptual differences, 2) measurement distinctions, and 3) empirical evidence, drawn from this dissertation, that the two concepts behave differently when subjected to the same precedent (i.e., purchase type: material versus experiential purchases).

#### **Similarities**

Lay people and scholars alike often associate the concepts of satisfaction and happiness. Perhaps this is due to the fact that both concepts are appropriate signals of positive outcomes (e.g., a pleasant consumption experience, a fully functional product). If we think in marketing terms, positive outcomes may take the form of a pleasant dinner in which one is catered to with attentiveness and dedication, or the use of an automobile that reliably and comfortably transports

the individual. In these situations, the restaurant manager and the car dealer would expect a satisfied and happy consumer.

In this sense, satisfaction and happiness have become objectives that service providers and product sellers strive to generate. This idea is captured in Fournier and Mick's (1999, p. 5) explanation that,

“Consumer satisfaction is central to the marketing concept. With evidence of strategic links between satisfaction and overall firm performance (Anderson, Fornell, and Lehmann 1992), it is now common to find mission statements designed around the satisfaction notion, marketing plans and incentive programs that target satisfaction as a goal, and consumer communications that trumpet awards for satisfaction achievements”.

In addition to these examples, firms tend to use the words satisfaction and happiness in ways that indicate they are what the consumer ultimately desires to gain. From laundry detergent to sports teams to parmesan cheese, the word satisfaction has been used widely. For instance, Tide detergent shows on its label “Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back”. In November of 2012, the NBA team Phoenix Suns launched the idea of “Satisfaction Guarantee Night”. Great Value's parmesan cheese label reads “We guarantee that you'll be fully satisfied”. More recently, some firms have moved from the term ‘satisfaction’ and adopted the (perhaps more timely) term ‘happiness’. Zappos' slogan reads “Delivering Happiness”, and Great Value's package of parmesan cheese now assures “If for any reason you aren't happy, we will replace it or return your money”.

Besides being useful signals of positive outcomes in the marketplace (i.e., what consumers ultimately desire), the concepts of happiness and satisfaction share another



commonality. They are complex concepts with a multitude of empirically demonstrated antecedents. The happiness literature has shown that happiness is affected by factors as varied as the level of power one enjoys (Kifer, Heller, Perunovic, and Galinsky, 2013), the amount of social respect one possesses (Anderson, Kraus, Galinsky, and Keltner, 2012), the types of interpersonal communication one engages in (Mehl et al., 2010), the anticipation of a desired event (e.g., a vacation) (Nawijn, Marchand, Veenhoven, and Vingerhoets, 2010), the positive social relationships one develops during childhood and adolescence (Olsson, McGee, Nada-Raja, and Williams, 2012), the composition of one's genes (Tellegen, Lykken, Bouchard, Wilcox, Segal, and Rich, 1988; Lykken and Tellegen, 1996), one's conjugal status (Glen, 1989) and the level of democracy in the society one lives in (Frey and Stutzer, 2000). In a comprehensive investigation, Fournier and Mick (1989) identified a similarly large number of sources of satisfaction. Among them are relief from the disconfirmation of anxieties, control over a process, awe and wonder over an unexpectedly positive outcome, novelty of the unexpected outcome, and dependability.

Another commonality between the two research streams refers to the level of development of their measurement tools. Survey scales, in particular, are arguably the most developed and commonly used measurement method. To some extent, the popularity of this measurement method results from the establishment of reliable and validated scales of satisfaction (e.g., Satisfaction Scale—Oliver (1980); Disconfirmation Measure—Oliver (1977); Confirmation Measure—Swan, Trawick, and Carroll (1981)) and of happiness (e.g., Subjective Happiness Scale (SHS)—Lyubomirsky and Lepper (1999); Positive Affect and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)—Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988); Happiness from the Purchase—Van Boven and Gilovich (2003)). Illustrating the quality of existing happiness scales, Diener (1984,

p. 46) concluded his evaluation of such scales by saying, “One can be encouraged by the state of measurement of subjective well-being.” (Subjective well-being was the term Diener used early in his career to refer to happiness).

## **Distinctions**

**Conceptualization.** As a reminder, happiness is defined as a sense of subjective well-being. An overall sense that life is good (Myers, 1992) and that life contains many positive situations and emotions (Ahuvia, 2008). On the other hand, consumer satisfaction has widely been defined in terms of the confirmation/disconfirmation paradigm, according to which the consumer compares a product’s performance to her previous expectation. (Dis)Confirmation occurs when performance and expectations (mis)match. This evaluative nature of the construct is echoed in Engel and Blackwell’s (1982, p. 501) conceptualization of satisfaction as “an evaluation that the chosen alternative is consistent with prior beliefs with respect to that alternative”, and Hunt’s (1977, p. 459) definition of the construct as “an evaluation rendered that the experience was at least as good as it was supposed to be.”

Hence, these definitions suggest that happiness is inward-oriented whereas satisfaction is outward-oriented. In other words, happiness is an internal emotion while satisfaction is an evaluation of an external entity based on the individual’s previous expectation about that entity. Fournier and Mick (1999) echoed this notion by saying that emotion has largely been absent from the consumer satisfaction paradigm. Yi (1989, p. 7) also illustrated this point by explaining that, “Satisfaction is also not an emotion itself”, “It is not just the pleasantness of a consumption experience, but the evaluation that the experience is as pleasurable as it was supposed or

expected to be. For example, one could have a pleasant experience, but one would still feel dissatisfied if it is below one's expectations. Thus, it is possible to get dissatisfaction without having a negative emotion.”

This latter point raised by Yi (1989) is particularly interesting because it casts doubt on the assumption that satisfaction is a necessary precedent of happiness. Put more broadly and simply: Do happiness and satisfaction necessarily go together? To explore this idea, I turn to the questions: 1) Can happiness be advanced even in the presence of dissatisfaction?, and 2) Can one be satisfied but not necessarily happier? I propose that the answer to both questions is positive. The theoretical rationale for this proposition follows.

In terms of question 1, the happiness literature has shown that altruistic behavior is a powerful driver of happiness (Lyubomirsky, Tkach, and Yelverton, 2004; Midlarsky, 1991). It thus follows that engaging in blood donation is likely to advance the donor's happiness. However, according to the satisfaction (dis)confirmation paradigm, dissatisfaction is likely to occur if, for example, the blood donation process is more painful than the donor previously expected. In this case, a donor who underwent a painful donation process is likely to experience both happiness and *dissatisfaction*.

With regards to question 2, I propose that consumer satisfaction may be positively affected whereas happiness remains unaffected. For instance, an equitable and fair business relationship with a home-insurance agency that exceeds consumer's expectations is likely to generate satisfaction. However, unless drivers of happiness are involved in that relationship (e.g., healthy social interactions, personal fulfillment, gratitude, and altruistic behaviors), the customer's happiness is likely to remain unaffected by that particular business relationship. In

this case, the insured individual is likely to experience high satisfaction and unchanged happiness.

**Measurements.** Here I extend the discussion beyond the conceptual realm to include the measurement one. Consumer satisfaction and happiness share some distinctions when it comes to measurement.

Despite the favorable state of satisfaction and happiness scales (discussed above, under the ‘Similarities’ heading), important drawbacks associated with directly measuring satisfaction and happiness (e.g., reactivity, biases) have motivated researchers to develop alternative, indirect measurement methods. Interestingly, the indirect methods designed to assess the two concepts differ widely. In commenting about indirect methods used to assess satisfaction, Yi (1989) pointed to the widespread use of behavioral indicators. Two of those methods have been of particular interest to researchers because of their unobtrusive nature. Namely, repeat purchase and complaint behavior. The author cautioned though that whereas these behaviors are taken as indicators of consumer satisfaction, they, at best, serve as proxies that complement and help overcome limitations of direct measurement methods (e.g., scales).

Indirect measures of happiness include inquiring individuals close to the focal participant (e.g., friends, relatives), observing smiling and laughing behaviors (Weinstein, 1982), and employing facial electromyography (Dimberg, 1988). Noteworthy, the electromyography method reflects well the internal nature of happiness, a topic discussed earlier. It does so because researchers using this method assess happiness by attaching sensors to zygomatic muscle regions where muscle activity is associated with happiness. Of note, because the indirect methods

discussed in this paragraph are beyond the control of the focal participant, they offer both solutions to critical limitations of direct methods and opportunities for cross-validation.

**Empirical Evidence.** Drawing on empirical evidence allows for an even more compelling and conclusive differentiation between happiness and satisfaction. In the General Discussion section, I will present data that compare happiness to satisfaction as they relate to the proposed model tested in this dissertation. For the purposes of the present section, it suffices to report that, in experiment 1, purchase type significantly affected happiness, but not satisfaction. Consistent with my discussion in this section, this result illustrates that happiness and satisfaction differ to a great extent. So much so that, when submitted to the same precedent (purchase type), they behave differently.

In sum, the two concepts share some common ground. Both function as useful signals of positive outcomes, abound in complexity and number of antecedents, and are at an advanced stage in terms of assessment method (scales being the most commonly used). On the other hand, happiness and satisfaction differ substantially on conceptual grounds. The first pertains to an inward-oriented emotion, whereas the second relates to outward-oriented evaluations. Interestingly, theoretical considerations indicate that happiness and satisfaction may in fact operate somewhat independently and even inversely to each other. Finally, experimental evidence in a consumption-related context provides support for the distinctions between the two concepts. Put together, the topics discussed in this section show that happiness and satisfaction are characterized by clear and important distinctions. This, in turn, indicates the appropriateness of recognizing and further investigating them as separate constructs. Moreover, it suggests that the concept of consumer happiness warrants its own, separate scholarly research stream.

## **Happiness' Relevance: Why is Happiness Important to Society and Consumer Research?**

A prolonged effort aimed at deepening our understanding of happiness naturally requires first a reflection of why happiness matters.

Happiness has intrigued great minds for centuries. It has been conceived as “the best, noblest, and most pleasant thing in the world...the highest good” (Aristotle. *Nichomachean Ethics*, 1925); it has become an unalienable right (i.e., the United States Declaration of Independence calls for the rights of “Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness”); and it has turned into a hot topic in academic circles (e.g., the thriving Positive Psychology movement started by Seligman in 1998) as well as in marketing initiatives by major firms (e.g., Coca-Cola, Zappo, Hershey's).

In explaining the relevance of happiness, one could also point to its intrinsic value (Nozick, 1989). Precisely, the positivity and pleasantness of happiness in and of itself make it a valuable end goal, which society should strive for and scientists ought to better understand.

Whereas these points provide initial evidence of the relevance of happiness, scientific works offer even more compelling indications. These works not only show that happiness is important but also explicate why. Such information is valuable because it can for example orient us regarding the allocation of scientific effort. For instance, a critic of happiness research could argue that scientific attention should be devoted primarily to alleviating negative emotions (vs. fostering positive ones) since problems demand more immediate attention. Fredrickson (1998), a researcher of happiness, acknowledged that this argument is pertinent given that “negative emotions pose a huge array of problems for individuals and for society, whereas positive

emotions pose just a few (p. 15)” and that, as some may argue, “efforts to understand positive emotion should take a backseat to solving these problems [caused by negative emotions] (p. 16).”

In tackling issues of this sort and advocating for the relevance of happiness, Fredrickson (1998) advanced the broaden-and-build model. She started from the principle held by some that the importance of negative emotions originates from their ability to promote a *narrow set of well-defined actions* necessary to deal with potentially life-threatening situations. As a result negative emotions are evolutionarily appropriate (e.g., guilt leads to the pursuit of forgiveness, fear leads to escape)—in other words, they have value for society. She acknowledged this view and introduced the idea of her broaden-and-build model by saying:

“In building a more suitable model for this subset of positive emotions, I propose discarding two key presumptions. The first is the presumption that emotions must necessarily yield specific action tendencies. Although positive emotions do often produce urges to act, they appear to be less prescriptive than negative emotions about which particular actions should be taken. In a sense, positive emotions could be said to yield *nonspecific action tendencies*, perhaps best exemplified by the “free activation” that Frijda (1986) has linked with joy. The second presumption that I suggest should be discarded is that emotions must necessarily spark tendencies for *physical* action. Some positive emotions seem instead to spark changes primarily in cognitive activity, with changes in physical activity (if any) following from these cognitive changes. Interest and contentment are key examples of this, and will be discussed in more detail below. So, in place of action tendencies, I propose speaking of *thought–action tendencies*. Additionally,

instead of presuming that these thought–action tendencies are specific, I propose discussing the relative breadth of the momentary thought–action repertoire. (p. 18)”

Fredrickson then moved on to explain how, similar to negative emotion, positive emotions such as joy/happiness, interest, contentment, and love add value to people’s lives. In general, they do so by broadening the individuals’ thought-action repertoire (versus negative emotions’ tendency to narrow them) and thus by allowing for the building of personal resources, in the form of intellectual, physical, and social resources. Take for example joy/happiness. The author explained that in a state of joy/happiness the individual is free to play, which involves not only social and physical play but also artistic and intellectual play. This free-minded, seemingly aimless, activity in turn promotes the acquisition of skills and the creation of socio-affective bonds. In the realm of contentment (which occurs in situations of safety, certainty, and low effort), the tranquil environment allows for lowered vigilance, and as Fredrickson (1998, p. 22) explained, “this emotion prompts individuals to savor their current life circumstances and recent successes, experience “oneness” with the world around them, and integrate recent events and achievement into their overall self-concept and world view.” As such, it “is not simple passivity, but rather a mindful broadening of a person’s self-views and world views.” Consequently, it carries with it valuable cognitive resources. Of notice, the author explained that an important property of the resources acquired by individuals experiencing positive emotions is that those resources tend to outlive the emotion itself—they are long-lasting.

Besides Fredrickson’s arguments related to the benefits of happiness, which have received strong empirical support (Hart, Vella, and Mohr, 2008; Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener, 2005; Reschly, Huebner, Appreton, and Antaramian, 2008; Tugade and Fredrickson, 2004)



research has demonstrated that happiness exerts positive influence over various aspects of our lives. It affects how people form impressions of others (Chaplin, Bastos, and Lowrey, 2010), how likely they are to enter new situations and pursue novel goals (Carver, 2003), how successful they are likely to be (Lyubomirsky, King, and Diener, 2005), how healthy they are (Fredrickson and Levenson, 1998), and perceive to be (Proulx and Snyder-Rivas, in press), and even how long they live (Veenhoven, 2008). Highlighting the relevance of happiness, Diener and Oishi (2000) reported that the vast majority of the respondents in their sample considered happiness extremely important, and that almost all believed it to be more important than money.

Another believer in the relevance of happiness, the American philosopher Haybron (2003) has offered four reasons why we should care about happiness: 1) we often resort to happiness when deliberating about important decisions (e.g., Will I be happy living at that other city? Working at that firm?); 2) we often refer to happiness in evaluating our own or other people's condition (e.g., Is my wife happy?); 3) happiness allows the prediction of behaviors (e.g., Happier people are more pleasant and helpful companions); and 4) happiness aids us in explaining behaviors (e.g., the extreme enjoyment of a regular activity by an individual may be understood as a manifestation of her high level of happiness; the surprisingly aggressive behavior of an individual may be justified by recent events that made him unhappy).

As this discussion illustrates, we now have an array of indicators, theoretical arguments (e.g., the broaden-and-build model), and empirical evidence supporting the relevance of happiness to society. In the consumer realm, we know that people often seek happiness through purchases (Pelletier, 2009). The knowledge advanced in this dissertation, in conjunction with that of previous works (e.g., Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003, Carter and Gilovich, 2010, 2012), may thus serve as a guide on the types of purchases most likely to lead to happiness.

Next, I bring up the well-accepted idea that one of marketing's main goals is to provide value, and discuss how that idea relates to the debatable role of marketing as a provider of happiness.

### **Marketing—A Provider of Value (and Happiness)**

It is undisputable that a major goal of marketing is to generate and provide value. This value may be offered to stockholders in the form of profit (as Milton Friedman would hold) and/or to a broader group comprised by various concerned parties (e.g., environmentalists, laborers, child-protection organizations, consumers). Notice that when we take this broader, more inclusive group of interested parties, not all stakeholders expect to receive value in monetary terms (e.g., the environmentalists might want fresher air, the laborers might desire longer vacations, the child-protection organizations might fight for Phthalates-free and BPA-free toys, and the consumers might expect an increased sense of joy). This broader view of value is consistent with Roberts' (2000) reference to value as something beyond only monetary worth. He mentions, for example, communication trust and solution generation as forms of value. It is in this broader perspective that happiness fits as a value that marketing should consider worth-generating and worth-providing.

### **Increasing Happiness versus Reducing Unhappiness**

The topic of happiness generation naturally raises questions about unhappiness reduction. Walton (2004) explained that unhappiness often results from the lack (or missing of) something

desirable. He illustrated this point with Freud's view that early in life people experience unhappiness due to the gradual separation from the maternal bond. Relatedly, research has shown that the absence of drivers of happiness often leads to unhappiness. Haller and Hadler (2006) for example explained that healthy social relationships offer a protection against suicide, anomie, and unhappiness. In the same vein, Amato and Booth (1991) reported that people from disrupted families experience greater unhappiness than do those from stable families. Hence, it seems that the presence (vs. absence) of healthy social relationships drives both happiness and unhappiness symmetrically.

Although the sources of happiness versus unhappiness may be similar, the consequences are not. For instance, we know that because happiness generally ensues in safe environments (i.e., when 'things are going well'), happier people tend to take more risks than do their less happy counterparts (Cyders and Smith, 2008; Martin, Friedman, Tucker, Tomlinson-Keasey, Crikui, Schwartz, 2002). In essence, this is because unhappiness signals the necessary employment of resources in the immediate situation in order to change it, whereas happiness gives one the green light to welcome new ventures (Bless, Clore, Gossilano, Rabel, and Schwarz, 1996; Schwarz, 1990). In light of this, it is therefore plausible to expect that consumption patterns differ along the unhappy-happy continuum. In concrete terms, it seems possible for example that, all else being equal, a happy (unhappy) individual is more likely to vacation at an unknown, foreign location (familiar location), or to take up lessons on a complex (simple) musical instrument.

## **Happiness Worldwide**

Worldwide, people are much more likely to report themselves as happy than unhappy. It therefore seems fortunate that most people are above neutral in the unhappiness-happiness continuum. On the other hand, that fact is also eye-opening. It suggests that for most people in our society there is more room to become unhappier than happier. As such, it also highlights the importance of a deeper understanding of how to maintain and increase happiness—a major purpose of this dissertation

With regards to people reporting themselves as happy (vs. unhappy), Diener and Diener (1996) found that among 43 nations from where nationally representative samples were available, 86% of respondents indicated that their happiness level was above neutral.

To test whether this tendency towards positive responding was due to measurement artifacts related to self-report scales, Diener and Diener (1996) applied, in addition to scales, a set of alternative measurement methods (e.g., responses from friends and family members, experience-sampling in which participants reported their mood each day during some weeks). Results showed that participants scored above the neutral point in all measurement methods. Hence, it did not appear that measurement artifacts were responsible for the positive responses.

In light of this, the authors offered potential explanations for this positivity bias: First, cognitive positivity—i.e., individuals tend to be prone to optimism, to remember positive events more quickly than negative ones, to believe that on most dimensions they are better than average; second, a set point that lies on the positive range—i.e., this is the point that people return to some time after positive and negative events. Having a set point on the positive range allows for maximum recognition of negative, potentially dangerous situations, and for harmonious

coexistence, approach tendencies, and acquisition of necessary and desired outcomes (e.g., food, sex).

### **Sources of Happiness**

Given the desirability of happiness, it is natural that thinkers and researchers pursue a deeper understanding of its drivers. In light of that, the goal of this section is to review various factors that the literature has shown to change people's happiness levels.

Early on, various sources of happiness were brought forward. Rousseau, for example, proposed that happiness comes from a state in which the soul lives in the present moment, rests, and focuses on the simple feeling of existence. The philosopher Epicurus, on the other hand, claimed that pleasures in life are the true sources of happiness. To him the most pleasant things in life come from achieving inner tranquility and being content with simple things, as well as from having deep conversations with friends—a claim of most interest to this dissertation. Differently, Aristotle held that happiness originates from leading a virtuous life and achieving one's full potential. The wide disagreement present in these early propositions highlights the complexity of the concept of happiness and the variety of its potential sources.

Fortunately, recent empirical research has not only investigated and identified drivers of happiness, but also quantified the extent to which they influence happiness. A thorough review of the literature allows for the grouping of these factors in four general categories: genetic, personality traits, life circumstances, and behavioral factors—the latter being of special interest for this dissertation. I discuss next each of these drivers of happiness.

## **Genetics**

Heritability research in the field of behavioral genetics has investigated whether happiness can be explained by genetics (Tellegen, Lykken, Bouchard, Wilcox, Segal, and Rich, 1988; Lykken and Tellegen, 1996). Tellegen et al. (1988) studied samples of identical twins, fraternal twins, and regular siblings who were reared together and others who were reared apart. Findings showed that identical twins have extremely similar levels of happiness (unhappiness), irrespective of the circumstance under which they were reared. Additionally, identical twins who were reared apart are more similar to each other than fraternal twins who were reared together or apart. On the other hand, fraternal twins vary in their happiness levels just as do regular siblings. In light of their results, the authors estimated that the composition of a person's genes is responsible for approximately 40% of their happiness. It is worth noting that subsequent studies have found substantially lower values for the heritability of happiness. McGue and Christense (1997), for example, studied elderly Danish twins and estimated a heritability factor of 27%. In sum, despite the varying estimates, empirical evidence compellingly shows that a portion of one's happiness is determined by genetic factors.

## **Personality Traits**

Research in this area has focused on stable traits to explain whether innate personality characteristics influence happiness. Among the most investigated traits are neuroticism and extraversion. Out of those investigations comes substantial evidence indicating that neuroticism is related to the experience of negative affect whereas extraversion is associated with the

experience of positive affect (Costa and McCrae, 1980; Lucas, Diener, Grob, Suh, and Shao, 1998). In offering a more nuanced explanation for the relation between extraversion and happiness, Argyle and Lu (1990) wrote that extraverts are significantly happier than introverts because of their more often participation and involvement in social events. Whereas Argyle and Lu's explanation appears sound, an intriguing finding by Pavot, Diener, and Fujita (1990) demonstrated that other aspects of extraversion were yet to be understood. Specifically, Pavot, Diener, and Fujita (1990) showed that, compared to introverts, extraverts are happier even when alone. Consistent with that finding, Diener, Sandvik, Pavot, and Fujita (1992) reported that extraverts are happier than their introvert counterparts whether they hold social or nonsocial jobs, and live alone or with other people. Subsequent investigation by Rusting and Larsen (1997) tested the hypothesis that extraverts are simply more sensitive to positive rewards. If so, one should expect that extraverts' happiness would increase more than that of introverts when both groups were in a similar situation. In their study, Rusting and Larsen (1997) exposed people to positive and negative mood inductions and found that, as a result of positive mood induction, extraverts experienced higher levels of positive emotions than did introverts. Interestingly, levels of emotions between the two groups did not differ in response to negative mood induction.

Besides neuroticism and extraversion, self-esteem is another trait that has often spurred the curiosity of happiness researchers. Numerous studies have shown an association between high self-esteem and happiness (e.g., Peterson, 1975; Reid and Ziegler, 1980). Interestingly, this finding holds for individualistic people (for whom distinction of the self from others is important), but not for collectivistic people (for whom integration of the self and others is desirable) (Suh, 1998).

In short, stable factors such as genes and personality traits are important determinants of an individual's happiness. Consequently, one could suggest that advancing happiness is essentially impossible. Kurtz and Lyubomirsky (2008), for example, wrote that "until fairly recently, there was very little scientific data to tell us whether or not people can lastingly boost their happiness. In fact, in previous years, researchers were doubtful about the possibility of becoming happier." Differently from these ideas, recent investigations have made a point that is of much relevance to this dissertation. They have shown that after accounting for the amount of happiness influenced by genes and personality traits, approximately 40% of an individual's happiness is determined by deliberate engagement in certain activities (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade, 2005). Consistent with this, Veenhoven (1994) observed that one's level of happiness is at best moderately constant in the short-term, is influenced by adversities and fortune, and is not totally innate. Following these ideas, I now turn to a discussion of two other categories of sources of happiness: life circumstances and behavior.

### **Life Circumstances**

By life circumstances I mean demographics (e.g., age, gender), and life status variables (e.g., income, health). The extant literature presents different results regarding the influence of demographic factors (e.g., gender, age, race, marital status, and education) on happiness. The commonality across these results, however, is that together those factors appear to account for a low variance in happiness. Specifically, Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers (1976) reported that 20% of an individual's happiness is determined by demographics. Argyle (2003) and Andrews and Withey (1976), on the other hand, reported 15% and 8%, respectively.



Similarly, most research indicates that life circumstances have a weak association with happiness. For instance, longitudinal data have showed that increases in real income within a country have not correlated with increases in happiness (Easterlin, 1974). Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) explained that the inability of wealth to boost happiness may lie in the fact that after basic needs are met, income's influence is attenuated. In explaining why life circumstances are responsible for only a low portion of people's happiness (approximately 10%), Kurtz and Lyubomirsky (2008, p. 26) suggested that "such factors as income, beauty, and even marital status are particularly prone to adaptation and people generally don't dwell on them. Instead, these circumstantial factors tend to exist in the background of your emotional life." In support of this, Brickman, Coates, and Janoff-Bulman (1978) concluded that adaptation level theory explained why 22 lottery winners involved in their study did not report being significantly happier than 22 individuals who had, in fact, recently become paraplegic (and had not won the lottery).

## **Behaviors**

Researchers have investigated the link between behaviors and happiness. These behaviors are actions that an individual intentionally engages in. Among the most researched ones are expressing gratitude (i.e., the appreciation of positive outcomes and the recognition that one has been the beneficiary of someone else's kindness or altruism) (Emmons, 2004), and practicing prosocial behaviors (i.e., a class of behaviors that focuses on benefiting others—even strangers—as opposed to benefiting oneself. Examples are altruism, caring, donating, helping, comforting, cooperating, and volunteering).

First, studies have found that gratitude is positively associated with happiness (Emmons and McCullough, 2003; Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, and Schkade, 2005). Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson (2005) reported that participants who wrote a thank-you letter to someone who had been kind to them had higher levels of happiness than those in the control condition who did not write a thank-you letter. The researchers also noted that out of the five happiness interventions that they tested (e.g., reflecting on personal strengths, writing down things that went well during the day), gratitude was the one that led to the highest increase in happiness among participants. Importantly, Seligman et al. (2005) reported that an assessment one month later indicated that gratitude appears to have some lasting effects. That is, the level of happiness among participants who wrote thank-you letters remained high even one month post-intervention.

Kurtz and Lyubomirsky (2008) suggested two reasons for gratitude's ability to advance happiness. One is that, by expressing gratitude, "you are bringing these things to the forefront of your attention, relishing them, and appreciating them more fully (p. 29)." Consequently, the grateful individual avoids the effects of adaptation mentioned earlier. Another reason is that expressing gratitude is a powerful means by which one may create or strengthen social ties—an important driver of happiness (Diener and Seligman, 2002).

Second, researchers have found that altruism and other prosocial behaviors are related to happiness. In a study on altruism, Midlarsky (1991) found that altruistic behavior has a positive effect on individuals' happiness. In addition, Dunn, Aknin, and Norton (2008) found that spending more of one's income on others predicted greater happiness. Relatedly, studies have shown that exhibiting prosocial behaviors such as performing an act of kindness, leads to more happiness. For example, Lyubomirsky, Tkach, and Yelverton (2004) found that participants who performed five acts of kindness to others over a period of six weeks subsequently reported higher

levels of happiness than did those in the control group who did not perform such acts. Research by Hunter and Linn (1980) also showed a positive association between prosocial behavior and happiness. Precisely, the researchers found that among retirees who were older than 65, those who volunteered were significantly happier than those who did not. Finally, in a longitudinal study with over 2,500 participants, Thoits and Hewitt (2001) concluded that volunteer work improved not only happiness but also physical health, self-esteem, life satisfaction, and depression.

These results support the link between certain types of behaviors that people choose to enact and happiness. In their role as consumers, people often engage in another type of behavior in their pursuit of happiness enhancement—i.e., they acquire material objects and life experiences. Should we expect, however, that these two types of purchases are dissimilar in their ability to advance happiness? I turn next to a discussion that addresses such question.

### **Purchases and Happiness**

Van Boven and Gilovich (2003) pioneered the investigation on whether material and experiential purchases affect happiness differently. By analyzing data from three studies and a national survey the authors concluded that purchases that are made with the intention of living through an event or a series of events (e.g., a movie at the theater) are superior in advancing happiness to those made with the intention of gaining ownership and possession, typically over a tangible good (e.g., a new watch).

Illustrating the definition of material and experiential purchases Carter and Gilovich (2012, p. 2) wrote, “Crudely, material possessions are part of the manufacturing economy;

experiences are part of the service economy. One purchases an experience to *do* and a material possession to *have*.”

It is worth noting that whereas researchers have often treated material versus experiential purchases as a dichotomy (mostly for operationalization purposes), a more realistic way of treating them is as endpoints of a continuum. Besides its two extremes (material purchases (e.g., a clock, a fire extinguisher) and experiential purchases (e.g., rock climbing, movie at the theater)), the continuum has a ‘middle-ground’ characterized by a gray area in which most purchases fall (e.g., a musical instrument, a bicycle).

Noticeably, this middle ground offers fruitful opportunities for research; precisely because purchases that fall under this category possess both material and experiential characteristics. Some characteristics may, for example, be particularly salient to certain groups of consumers. The material properties of a piano are likely to be more salient and important to a piano collector than to a student of piano. Additionally, this flexibility in the way consumers see a purchase allows for the investigation of the consequences of motivating them to frame the same purchase in material versus experiential terms. Recognizing this opportunity, Carter and Gilovich (2012, study 4) motivated their participants to frame a television either in material or in experiential terms. Consistent with their predictions, participants in the experiential (vs. material) framing condition reported that the TV was more representative of their true sense of self and anticipated that the TV would bring them more happiness. Also capitalizing on the flexibility of purchases that fall in between the two extremes of material versus experiential, this dissertation examines how framing the same purchase in material versus experiential terms affects sharing and happiness (experiment 3).

Subsequent to Van Boven and Gilovich's (2003) work, various researchers have taken on the challenge of discovering more nuanced relations in the model. For example, Nicolao et al. (2009) followed with an investigation on the possible moderating role played by the valence of the purchase outcome. Specifically, the authors studied whether the superiority of experiences in advancing happiness holds only for purchases that turn out positively, and not for those that turn out negatively. As they hypothesized, when purchases turn out positively, experiential purchases advance more happiness than do material purchases (replicating Van Boven and Gilovich (2003)). However, when they turn out negatively, experiential purchases are not superior (and sometimes are inferior) to material purchases. Additionally, the researchers explained that adaptation accounts for these different effects. Specifically, they found evidence that people adapt more slowly to experiential (vs. material) purchases and, as a result, experience greater happiness (when the purchase turns out positively) and greater unhappiness (when the purchase turns out negatively) with those purchases.

In a commentary piece, Van Boven (2005) brought up additional factors that could account for the superiority of experiential purchases—e.g., more relatedness, less social comparison. In highlighting the importance of relatedness, Van Boven (2005, p. 139) wrote that “experiences are inherently more social than material possessions. We go out to dinner, ski, and travel with other people. Buying and wearing sweaters and shoes and purchasing stereos are more likely to be solitary activities.” In explaining why experiential purchases are likely to lead to less social comparison, he mentioned that “One possibility is that experiences are regarded as more unique than material possessions.” These two potential mediators were subsequently tested by Howell and Hill (2009) who found evidence supporting both. Their results revealed that participants in the experiential (vs. material) purchase condition indicated higher levels of

relatedness (e.g., “I made new friends or strengthened existing friendships because of this purchase.”) and lower levels of social comparison (e.g., “I am concerned about how others will perceive this purchase.”). Additional support to the latter finding was provided by Carter and Gilovich (2010) who, from a set of eight studies, concluded that people tend to engage in more evaluative comparisons to other available options when buying material goods (vs. life experiences). According to the authors, these evaluative comparisons involve a troublesome process that attenuates material purchases’ ability to cultivate happiness.

More recently, Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2012) found that the interchangeability of material purchases makes them more likely to generate regret of action (purchaser’s remorse), whereas the uniqueness of experiential purchases makes them more likely to create regret of inaction (missed opportunity). Lastly, from a set of clever experiments, Carter and Gilovich (2012) demonstrated that people see their experiential (vs. material) purchases as being closer to their true self-concept. This closeness to one’s self, in turn, contributes to experiential purchases’ greater potential for cultivating happiness.

Dunn, Gilbert, and Wilson (2011) provided a rich discussion and overview of a number of factors that may help explain experiential purchases’ superiority in generating happiness. First, the authors echoed Rousseau’s idea by suggesting that, “A wandering mind is an unhappy mind, and one of the benefits of experiences is that they keep us focused on the here and now (p. 116).” Second, reflecting Nicolao et al.’s (2009) work, they observed that people are likely to adapt to things quicker than to experiences and, as a result, draw less happiness from the former. Third, they explained that people more often anticipate and remember experiences than material objects. Fourth, related to Carter and Gilovich’s (2012) findings, they claimed that experiences are more linked to our identities and, thus, are more self-defining. Last, they argued that people

are more likely to share their experiential purchases with others. Importantly, in Dunn et al.'s (2011) work, sharing does not mean telling others about (as it does in this dissertation). Instead, it takes the meaning of participating together or experiencing jointly.

It is noticeable that, although researchers have suggested and identified important mechanisms to explain Van Boven and Gilovich's (2003) finding, we know relatively little about how deliberate, post-purchase behaviors associated with material and experiential purchases influence happiness. In addressing that gap, I focus this investigation on whether sharing—the behavior of communicating with others about oneself or things relevant to oneself—contributes to our understanding of why experiences make us happier than do material objects.

Research has suggested that consumers draw benefits from their purchases not only during pre-purchase (e.g., through anticipation) and during the enjoyment of the purchase (e.g., through direct experience), but also after the enjoyment (e.g., through recollection) (Elster and Loewenstein, 1992). In highlighting the influence of post-enjoyment behaviors, Chancellor, and Lyubomirsky (2011, p. 135) wrote that “When people reflect and reminisce... they relive the positive experience and the associated positive feelings,” and that “Revisiting memorable and pleasant experiences through reminiscing and reflecting can give a happiness boost that was paid for long ago.” Thus, extant research suggests that thinking back about a purchase is a way of potentially acquiring additional psychological benefits (e.g., happiness) from it.

Besides reminiscing, post-enjoyment behaviors can take many forms. For example, in describing the behaviors likely to happen after a positive event, Kurtz and Lyubomirsky (2008, p. 21) wrote, “You probably thought about the event constantly, replaying it in your mind, telling your friends and family all about it.” Thus, as this excerpt highlights, a common and potentially beneficial post-event behavior is to tell others about that event. In line with this, it is plausible to

expect that sharing about a purchase is a particularly powerful process because it involves not only recall and reflection but also social interaction—a rich source of happiness (Diener and Seligman, 2002). A detailed discussion on the sharing literature is presented on chapter 4.

Chapter 3 deepens the discussion on material versus experiential purchases. It does so by elaborating on how the two purchase types relate to the literature on product versus service. The two research streams share some ground, and chapter 4 sheds light on their similarities and differences.



### **CHAPTER 3: MATERIAL VERSUS EXPERIENTIAL PURCHASES AND PRODUCT VERSUS SERVICE**

In explaining the definitions of material and experiential purchases Carter and Gilovich (2012, p. 2) wrote, “Crudely, material possessions are part of the manufacturing economy; experiences are part of the service economy.” Thus, the authors seem to suggest a parallel between the material versus experiential purchases and the product versus service literatures. Based on the likely associations between the two research streams, it is important to 1) discuss the mature research in the area of product versus service, and to 2) evaluate how it relates to the comparatively more recent research in material versus experiential purchases.

#### **The Distinctions between Products and Services**

Researchers have identified dimensions along which products and services differ. Rathmell (1966) forwarded the now widely accepted dimensions of intangibility, inseparability of production and consumption, heterogeneity, and perishability. The intangibility of services, for example, makes them harder to inventory, count, and measure (Gronroos, 1990). Differently from products that are often produced and consumed at separate locations, services are co-produced and this inseparability, according to Johnson and Nilsson (2000, p. 7), means that “service reliability is more outside the control of the firm.” With regards to heterogeneity, Lee (1993, p. 17) explained that, unlike products, services “depend on who provides them and when/where they are provided. Thus, the outcomes of services, unlike those of most manufactured goods, tend to be highly variable and perceived to be so.” Finally, in terms of

perishability, products can last for a lifetime (e.g., high-quality tools) or for a few days (e.g., milk), whereas services perish at each moment they go unused (e.g., the time a hairdresser is idle).

### **Service-Dominant Logic Challenges the Distinction between Products and Services**

The very distinction between products and services has recently been challenged by proponents of Service-Dominant Logic (S-D Logic). This perspective was born out of the distinguished article by Vargo and Lusch (2004a) published in the *Journal of Marketing*. The general claim of S-D Logic is that even when consumers buy tangible goods their goal is to obtain the services that those goods perform for them. Consequently, “it is *all of marketing* that needs to break free from the manufacturing-based model of the exchange of output (Vargo and Lusch, 2004b, p. 324)” and, instead, focus on a service-based model. Following the seminal paper by Vargo and Lusch (2004a), Vargo and Morgan (2005) provided an interesting historical journey that 1) explained the early product-centered paradigm and the more recent service-centered paradigm, and 2) made its case for why only the latter is now appropriate for explaining marketing-related phenomena.

### **My View**

In my view, the distinction between products and services is warranted. I also hold that this distinction is appropriate for a deeper exploration and understanding of marketing phenomena. I explain next the rationale behind these views.

Besides the arguments discussed in the section ‘The Distinctions between Products and Services’, I contend that the consumption of products is restrictive whereas that of services is liberating. Specifically, the first is bounded by the characteristics given to the product by its creator. By contrast, the second is characterized by intangibility, unpredictability, and flexibility. So, even if the researcher’s focus is on the benefits that the product provides (what Vargo and Lusch (2008) call services, in the plural), the beneficiary is likely limited by the product’s very capabilities. Going beyond the product’s own features and enacting creative consumption is therefore impossible. A somewhat similar view is held by McCracken (1988, p. 69). In explaining the limited ability of material things to serve as means of communication, he wrote, “Material culture is, as I have tried to demonstrate in this chapter, extremely limited in its expressive range. Deprived of combinational freedom and generative potential, it is a relatively impoverished means of communication.”

Additionally, Vargo and Lusch (2004b) claimed that the four characteristics identified by Rathmell (1966) to differentiate a product from a service “only have meaning from a manufacturing perspective (p. 324).” As the present dissertation shows, the distinction between material and experiential purchases has important implications also from a consumer’s perspective. To the extent that material objects correspond with products and experiences correspond with services, the present research offers indication that consumers are likely to both distinguish between a product and a service and also to draw different benefits from them. Hence the differences between product and service are likely to affect a broader group of individuals than was proposed by Vargo and Lusch (2004b).

Finally, I contend that the argument that all that is exchanged in the marketplace can be accommodated by a single category called *services* is unfounded. To claim that all forms of

benefits consumers get from material products are different forms of services (Vargo and Lusch, 2008) appears an overstretching of what the word services means. It is undisputable that some benefits from products can adequately be categorized services (e.g., a vacuum cleaner that automatically cleans areas of a carpet), however, products also provide feelings and emotions (e.g., a bunny that comforts a child at bed), pleasure (e.g., a perfume or a painting), information (e.g., a wall clock or an encyclopedia) and a wealth of other benefits that do not fit under the services category. Placing these different forms of benefits under a single category called ‘services’ seems an act of oversimplification that overlooks important nuances of each benefit.

Thus, I hold that a product and a service differ in substantial ways. Taking their differences into account allows us to observe and understand details of the marketplace that we otherwise would not. Next, I explore similarities and differences between the product versus service and material versus experiential purchases literatures.

### **A Comparison of Two Literatures: Product/Service and Material/Experiential Purchases**

The two literatures have two key issues in common: (1) the central constructs fall along a continuum but researchers often focus on the end-points, and (2) a core concept that places purchases along the continuum is tangibility. However, they may be distinguished by (1) the emphasis placed on interactions with service personnel, and (2) the focus of interest (consumer vs. firm).

## Central Constructs Are Endpoints of a Continuum

It is well accepted in the product versus service and in the material versus experiential purchase literatures the notion that their central constructs fall along or are endpoints of a continuum. In the product versus service literature, this view is illustrated in Johnson and Nilsson's (2000, p. 13) words:

“Although the ratio of goods to services in the offering is difficult to quantify, there are categorical distinctions in the literature that we can use (Martin and Home 1992; see also Kotler, 2000). There are four categories that work well for the ACSI industries in our study: (1) pure goods (food products, soft drinks), (2) core goods with accompanying services (cars, computers), (3) core services with accompanying goods (airlines, hotels), and (4) pure services (phone service, banking).”

Related to this view, Evardsson et al. (2000, p. 920) hints at the existence of a gray area between products and services when he writes that firms often offer both (suggesting the inseparability of the two that is predominant of that gray area). He wrote, “Naturally, a firm's offering is probably composed of both product and service components. Yet certain industries remain primarily services while others are primarily products.”

In the material versus experiential purchases literature, that view is echoed by Carter and Gilovich (2012, p. 2). As the excerpt below illustrates, the authors first acknowledged the challenge in differentiating the constructs and then followed with a discussion of their conceptualization, including their locations as extreme points of a spectrum:

“Although the borderline between the two categories [material and experiential purchases] can be imprecise, with some purchases falling somewhere in the vague middle of the material–experiential spectrum, the categories nonetheless appear to be useful and readily intuited by participants (see Carter & Gilovich, 2010).”

As these discussions suggest, the two literatures share ground related to construct conceptualization. For operationalization purposes, though, researchers commonly treat the constructs as a dichotomy. In the present dissertation, I follow the literature in both 1) concurring with the spectrum explanation, and, for the sake of operationalization, 2) using the constructs as a dichotomy.

## **Tangibility**

The two literatures define product and material purchase very similarly. Specifically, they converge around the notion of tangibility (Evardsson et al., 2000; Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003).

Bringing the (in)tangibility discussion to the consumer realm, the tangibility of material purchases versus the intangibility of experiential purchases may have important implications. For instance, material objects (but not life experiences) allow for physical possession and ownership. Based on the endowment effect literature (Strahilevitz and Loewenstein, 1998, Thaler, 1980), that suggests that consumers’ attachment to and valuation of their objects (vs. experiences) should be stronger. Contrary to this idea, however, Carter and Gilovich (2012, study 5) found that people are more willing to let go of their material purchases than of their experiential purchases. The authors found that people’s tendency to cling more firmly to their experiences

(vs. material objects) results from the fact that experiences are seen as closer to their sense of self. In other words, experiences are a more important part of who they are. Hence, it appears that experiences' ability to represent one's sense of self weights more for attachment than does objects' ability to be possessed and owned.

### **Customer-Provider Interactions**

Some researchers hold that a key characteristic of services is the interaction between provider and customer. Lee (1993, p. 17) for example explained that, "services are essentially "people-based," and typically produced and consumed in the same period involving a high level of provider/client interaction, they depend on who provides them." This inseparability is echoed by Hoffman and Bateson (1997, p. 34) who mentioned, "both the customer and the service provider are involved in the service delivery process."

Other authors are more flexible in their characterization. They allow for services in which the customer is the sole party involved. Edvardsson et al. (2000, p. 920), for example, explained that "Some of these services are produced in interaction with the service company's employees (as with airline and hotel services), while in other cases the customer acts as 'sole producer' of the service (as with telecom services or ATM machines)."

Yet other conceptualizations accommodate purchases that exclude the participation of the customer altogether. Johnson and Nilsson (2000, p. 36) for instance classified parcel delivery and personal insurance as services.

Johnson and Nilsson's (2000) conceptualization constitutes a critical difference between how service and experiential purchase are conceived. Precisely, whereas the service concept

accommodates the absence of the customer, the experience concept requires her presence. By definition, experiential purchases are those the customer lives through a set of events or activities. In this sense, the experiential purchase concept encompasses only a portion of the purchases that fall under the umbrella of services. As pointed out by Carter and Gilovich (2012, p. 2) echoed by saying that “experiences are part of the service economy.”

This distinction becomes important when we consider the underlying processes responsible for the higher happiness generated by experiences (vs. objects). As this dissertation’s model shows, such effect can be explained by the fact that people share about their experiential purchases more. The model also shows that the higher sharing of experiences is explained by people’s expectation of being more positively viewed in the eyes of their listeners. If experiential purchases were replaced by the more general concept of services, I would expect that these relations would be attenuated or even eliminated. This hypothesis follows the rationale that the ‘living through’ aspect of experiential purchases is critical for teller’s expectation of higher regard. In other words, it seems unlikely that sharing about a service such as mail delivery or life insurance, neither of which involves the direct participation of the teller, will be a potent generator of regard for the teller.

### **Provider versus Customer’s Viewpoint**

This section presents another distinction between the literatures. This distinction is a slight but important one. While the product versus service literature looks at phenomena from the viewpoint of the provider, the material versus experiential purchase literature does so from the viewpoint of the customer. In other words, one puts more focus on the providing end of the



relationship whereas the other emphasizes the receiving end of the relationship. This is illustrated, for instance, in Johnson and Nilsson's (2000, p. 17) discussion of how they classified industries along the product-service continuum:

"The only two industries for which the classification was not so clear were household appliances and consumer electronics. Our final classification is based on the argument that the amount of service provided to customers of these goods is relatively minimal, especially compared to those who purchase and consume automobiles and personal computers. Both the automobiles and computers are, on average, more expensive purchases where service is more naturally bundled with the goods."

This point is also present in Nilsson, Johnson, and Gustafsson's (2001, p. 7, italics added) words that, "Mills and Moberg (1982) categorize the differences between products and services as relating to differences in *output* and differences in *process*."

It is illustrative to compare these descriptions to that offered by Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, p. 1194) regarding the use of consumer's intention as the starting point to define material and experiential purchases:

"One way to meet this interpretive challenge [of defining the two concepts] is to rely on people's intentions when investing in their happiness. Thus, *experiential purchases* are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a life experience: an event or series of events that one lives through. *Material purchases* are those made with the primary intention of acquiring a material good: a tangible object that is kept in one's possession."

As these excerpts demonstrate, product versus service researchers predominantly take the viewpoint of the producer or service provider. On the other hand, material versus experiential purchase researchers look at phenomena exclusively from the point of view of the consumer. This divide is manifest by the topics emphasized by each literature. The services literature has focused on topics such as 1) customer satisfaction, 2) the aspects of the product of the service that drive customer satisfaction, 3) the key internal practices of service versus product organizations that affect satisfaction, and 4) the relations among satisfaction, loyalty, and profitability. In contrast, the comparatively more recent literature on material versus experiential purchases has focused solely on consumer happiness.

### **Conclusions**

Based on the above discussion, the product versus service literature orients this dissertation's research in the following ways: First, it reinforces the conceptualization adopted by the material versus experiential purchases literature that the two types of purchases are endpoints of a continuum, with a vast middle area where most purchases fall.

Second, it shows that tangibility is indeed an important dimension of material purchases. In addition to tangibility, however, material purchases' ability to be possessed and owned is also considered an important dimension by researchers of material versus experiential purchases.

Third, the service literature illustrates that different services employ different levels of consumer participation and consumer-provider interaction. As discussed previously, consumers may have no active participation, as in parcel delivery service. She may co-participate with the service provider, as in a body massage session. And, finally, she may be the sole participant, as

when using an ATM machine. This classification demonstrates that the service concept is a broader concept that encompasses the experiential purchase one. That is because, by definition, experiential purchases are those the individual lives through one or a series of events. Hence, only those purchases in which the purchaser is a participant fall under the category of experiential purchases. Importantly, though, the experiential purchase concept accommodates purchases in which the individual plays an active (e.g., a musical instrument lesson) as well as a passive role (e.g., a musical concert), as long as she is indeed a participant.

The goal of the next chapter is to advance the discussion on sharing literature and, at its later parts, present the theoretical arguments that support the first three hypotheses of this dissertation's model.

## CHAPTER 4: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF SHARING

Researchers have argued that sharing—defined here as non-commercial, interpersonal communication of information about oneself or about something relevant to oneself—is an important component for the very existence and development of social relationships (Altman and Taylor, 1973; Derlega, Metts, Petronio, and Margulis, 1993). In echoing this point, Argyle and Henderson (1984) claimed that the number-one rule of friendship is the sharing of news of success. Research has also shown that sharing brings benefits as varied as psychological adjustment, physical health, decreased stigmatization, liking for others, and healthy personality (Collins and Miller, 1994; Corrigan and Matthews, 2003; Cozby, 1973; Frattaroli, 2006; Jourard, 1959; Omazu, 2000; Rime, Finkenauer, Luminet, Zech, and Philippot, 1998). In light of these benefits and the relevance of sharing for relationship development, it perhaps should not be surprising that most of the time (7 out of 10 days) people share with someone about positive events that happen to them (Gable et al., 2004). Sharing is, therefore, an important and ubiquitous behavior.

Although sharing happens in many forms, not all forms of consumption-related verbal communication fall under sharing's conceptual umbrella. Non-personal forms of communication, such as mass media advertising and public relations, are therefore excluded. Moreover, Honeycutt's (1987) "imagined interactions", which involve cognitive processes whereby the person imagines herself holding conversations with others (i.e., a sort of intrapersonal communication), are similarly outside of sharing's boundaries. Finally, communication with beings of any nature other than the human (spiritual beings—e.g., Brown, 2008) equally falls outside of sharing's conceptual sphere.

Among the types of consumption-related communications that fit sharing's definition are word-of-mouth, complaining behavior, and capitalization. Regarding the first, word-of-mouth, defined by File, Judd, and Prince (1992) as "recommending the firm and the service to others" and by Mowen and Minor (1998) as "an exchange of thoughts, ideas, or comments between two or more consumers, none of whom is a marketing source" possess the properties of sharing behavior. In terms of consumer complaining behavior, researchers have for decades sought a better understanding of the behavior (Day and Landon, 1977), including what encourages (Blodgett and Granbois, 1992) and discourages it (Stephens and Gwinner, 1998). Complaint dialogs are of a public (e.g., legal action, redress sought from the seller) or private nature (e.g., negative word-of-mouth) (Day and Landon, 1977). Finally, capitalization, which refers to the process of telling others about positive events and thereby extracting additional benefits from those events (Langston, 1994), is highly consistent with the concept of sharing.

Noticeably, investigations into each of these research streams started at widely different times (e.g., Capitalization was coined by Langston in 1994, WOM studies date at least as far back as 1955 with the work of Katz and Lazarsfeld). Not surprisingly, each of these research streams claims to have its own distinct conceptual space in the literature. Interestingly, however, conceptual overlap and interchangeable use of these terms are commonly identified across these literature streams. Day and Landon (1997), for example, explained that *complaint behavior* often occurs through negative *word-of-mouth*. Berger and Iyengar's (2012, p. 2—italics added) wrote, "consumers *share word-of-mouth* through different conversation channels." Wojnicki and Godes' (2008, p. 3—italics added) explained that, "this research provides compelling evidence that when consumers generate *WOM*, they are not simply communicating marketplace information, but also *sharing* something about themselves as individuals."

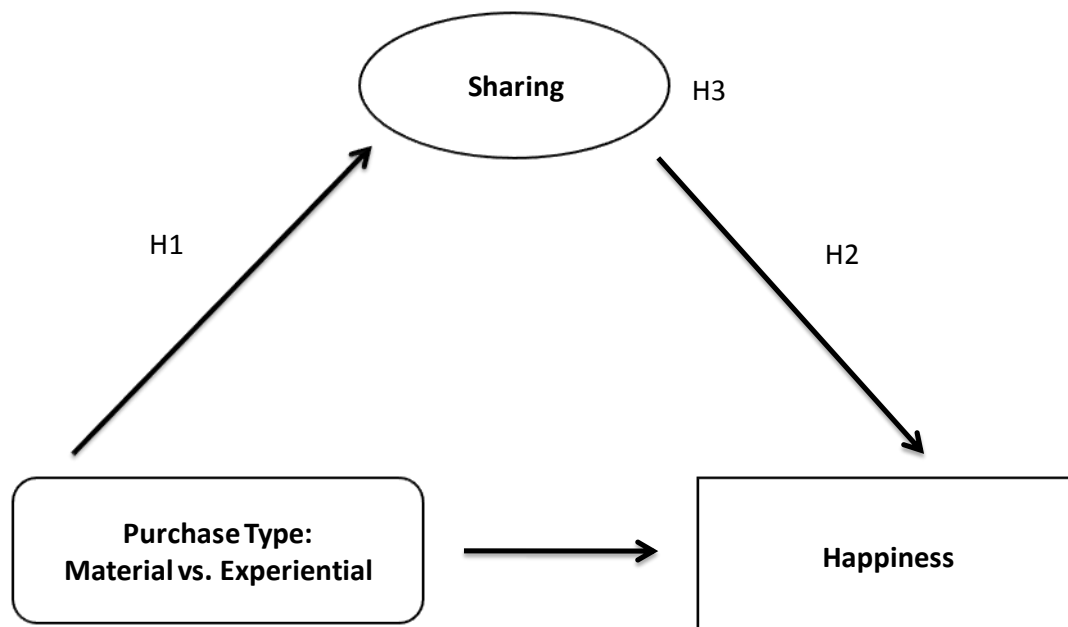
In light of the above discussion, it is perhaps not surprising that the literatures on sharing and WOM contain many of the same antecedents (e.g., self-enhancement—e.g., Wojnicki and Godes, 2008) and outcomes (e.g., redress and improved emotional state—e.g., Pennebaker, 1985). In this dissertation, I focus on positively-valenced sharing, so complaining behavior and negative word-of-mouth will not be discussed further.

The discussion on sharing continues in the next section. It now presents literature that conceptually supports my first three hypotheses, which together form the sharing mediation.

### **The Sharing Mediation – Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3**

The central proposition of this dissertation is that sharing mediates the effect of purchase type (i.e., material vs. experiential) on happiness. The first three hypotheses address each part of that linkage (see Figure 1). The links will be discussed in turn.

Figure 1



The proposed model rests on the proposition that individuals are more inclined to share about their experiential than about their material purchases. Interestingly, existing literature offers support both for and against this proposition.

In support of my proposition, research has shown that people for whom the consumption of life experiences is more central tend to prioritize interpersonal relationships (Wong, 1997), and to value the opportunity to reminisce their memories of special experiences (Zauberman, Ratner, and Kim, 2009). Differently, people for whom material objects are more central in their pursuit of happiness tend to be socially anxious (Schroeder and Dugal, 1995), socially isolated (Heilbroner, 1956), self-centered, and less able to share things with others (Tatzel, 2002). Thus, compared to people associated with material purchases, those associated with experiential ones are more likely to reminisce and have stronger social traits—two characteristics likely to lead to sharing.

Similarly, extant research has pointed to the suitability of experiences as a topic of conversation (Rimé and Paez, 2007; Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003, 2004; Van Boven et al., 2010). In Van Boven et al. (2010, study 5) pairs of previously unacquainted participants were instructed to engage in face-to-face conversations about either material or experiential purchases. After the conversation, the researchers assessed participants' overall impressions by measuring 1) their impression of the conversation partner, and 2) their interest in engaging in a similar conversation. They also assessed participants' overall enjoyment by measuring 1) their enjoyment of the conversation, and 2) their enjoyment in hearing about the purchase described by the partner. Consistent with the authors' predictions, participants formed more favorable impressions of a conversation partner when the topic of discussion was related to experiential

(vs. material) purchases. Similarly, participants reported higher enjoyment from conversations about experiential (vs. material) purchases.

On the other hand, and contrary to my proposition, Berger and Schwartz (2011) demonstrated that consumer-to-consumer communication is strongly driven by the accessibility of what is shared. According to them, purchases that are visible or that are cued by the environment are more often brought up in conversations than those that are not. This suggests that, contrary to my hypothesis, the higher visibility of material purchases should make them more often a topic of consumer conversations.

In summary, despite the compelling point made by Berger and Schwartz (2011), I argue that the literature more soundly supports the prediction that people are more inclined to share experiential (vs. material) purchases (instead of the other way around). This evidence is based on 1) the personality traits of people associated with experiential purchases (e.g., they tend to be socially involved) versus material purchases (e.g., they tend to be socially isolated), and on 2) the more positive outcomes derived from conversations about experiential (vs. material) purchases. This set of evidence leads to the hypothesis that:

**H1:** People are more inclined to share experiential (vs. material) purchases.

Research has shown that sharing leads to far-reaching benefits. Specifically, sharing can be beneficial 1) to the teller, 2) to the interpersonal relation between the teller and the listener, and 3) to the shared event itself.

First, in terms of teller's benefits, sharing (vs. not sharing) daily positive events leads the teller to experience greater positive affect and well-being (Gable et al., 2004). Second, with



regards to interpersonal benefits, research has revealed that people who share deeper, more intimate information are more liked than those who share at lower levels, and that tellers tend to like listeners as a consequence of having shared with them (Collins and Miller, 1994). Similarly, Gable, Gonzaga, and Strachman (2006) found that sharing leads to relationship well-being.

Lastly, studies on event-related benefits have shown that sharing helps one to make sense and achieve a better understanding of the shared event (Finkenauer and Rime, 1998). Additionally, “sharing a positive event with others requires retelling the event, which creates an opportunity for reliving and reexperiencing the event (Gable et al., 2004, p. 229).” Moreover, telling others is likely to prolong the duration of the positive effects of the event (Verduyn, Van Mechelen, and Tuerlinckx, 2011) and to “make the event both more memorable to oneself and to others (Langston, 1994, p. 1113).” In a thoughtful statement, the writer John Harrigan (2001) summed the relevance and benefits of sharing by saying, “Happiness held is the seed; happiness shared is the flower.”

In addition to the preceding evidence, and of particular interest to this dissertation, are findings by Mehl et al. (2010). The authors used an Electronically Activated Recorder (EAR) to unobtrusively record portions of people’s conversations as they went by their regular lives. The researchers’ analyses indicated that happiness was related to spending less time alone and more time conversing with others. Importantly, happiness was associated with engaging less in small talk and more in substantive conversations—the type of conversation that often takes place in sharing. Even though the direction of the causal effect could not be established in Mehl et al.’s (2010) study due to the correlational nature of the findings, the authors explained that “deep conversations may actually make people happier. Just as self-disclosure can instill a sense of

intimacy in a relationship, deep conversations may instill a sense of meaning in the interaction partners (p. 540).”

In summary sharing leads to various benefits. Noticeably, those benefits are either direct drivers of happiness (e.g., social relationships, enjoyment of positive events) or actual components of happiness (e.g., positive affect). This rationale leads to the hypothesis:

**H2:** Sharing positively affects happiness.

Given the logic for H1 and H2, I propose that sharing is likely to mediate the relationship between purchase type and happiness. Precisely, I propose that sharing is a factor responsible for the superiority of experiential over material purchases in advancing happiness. Formally stated:

**H3:** Sharing mediates the effect of purchase type on happiness.

## **CHAPTER 5: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF EXPECTED REGARD**

In this chapter, I define and set the scope of the concept responsible for the second mediation investigated in this dissertation—the expected regard mediation. Then, I present the theoretical arguments that support hypotheses 4, 5, and 6.

Expected regard is the central concept of the second mediation in the proposed model. It refers to the regard that a consumer expects to gain from the listener as a result of sharing. I propose that expected regard mediates the first link in the model explicated in Chapter 4. In other words, the link between purchase type (material vs. experiential) and sharing is mediated by expected regard.

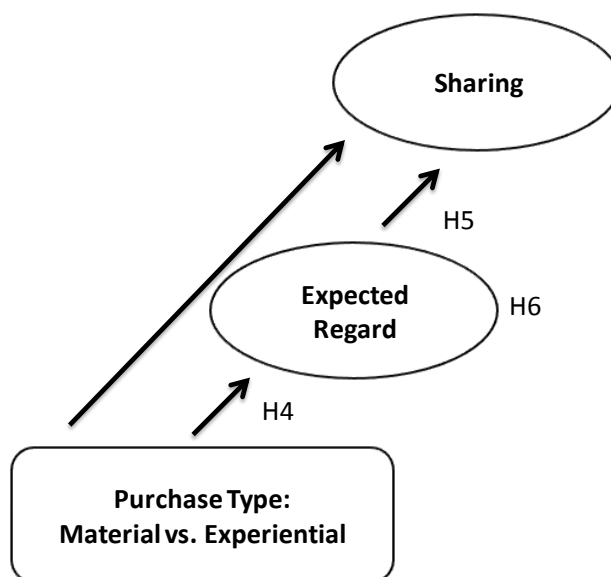
The concept “expected regard” is distinct from “regard.” Precisely, “regard” captures the reputation or esteem attributed to the individual by others, whereas “expected regard” captures the reputation or esteem the individual expects to gain from others. While subtle, this distinction is important because it specifies who the focal agents are. For regard, the focal agents are all people who confer the individual a level of regard. For expected regard, the focal agent is the individual herself, the recipient. Recognizing this difference is also important because how others regard the individual and how the individual expects to be regarded may differ substantially—a possibility that brings about interesting research questions.

### **The Expected Regard Mediation – Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6**

The secondary goal of this dissertation is to examine the possible mediating role of expected regard in the effect proposed in H1 (the link between purchase type and sharing). The

next three hypotheses address each part of that linkage (see Figure 2). They will each be discussed in turn.

Figure 2



In a comprehensive investigation into the popular notions of materialism, Fournier and Richins (1991) found that people possess various negative conceptions about individuals associated with material objects. These conceptions covered areas such as personality traits and attitudes (including self-concept), values and life goals, and salient defining characteristics. For example, their analyses showed that individuals for whom material objects are central are seen as “possession-focused in thought, word, and deed (p. 408).” Those people were also linked to negative characteristics such as disregard of others, insecurity, envy, excessive status consciousness, and interpersonal detachment.

On the other hand, research has found that people associated with life experiences have positive regard in the eyes of others and their own. Related to favorable regard by others, Van Boven and Gilovich (2004) asked participants to evaluate profiles of two university students, one who spent most of his/her disposable income in life experiences, and another who spent it in

material objects. Results revealed that people form more favorable impressions of experiential than of material others. These results are consistent with the previously mentioned finding by Van Boven et al. (2010, study 5) that individuals form more positive impressions of a conversation partner when the topic of discussion involves experiential (vs. material) purchases. In terms of self-regard, research in nostalgia has indicated that thinking about past positive experiences leads to increased positive self-regard (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, and Routledge, 2006, study 5).

Noticeably, the present work differs from the above-mentioned in that it examines the teller's expectation about how others will regard her (vs. how others actually regarded her). Previous work, nevertheless, enriches the theoretical foundation leading to hypothesis 4.

**H4:** People associated with experiential (vs. material) purchases expect to be more highly regarded by others when they talk about their purchase.

According to Chaudoir and Fisher (2010, p. 13), sharing “can impact nearly every domain of a person's life and well-being.” Hence, it is not surprising that people selectively and strategically engage in that behavior. Relatedly, Omarzu (2000) explained that as part of the process of deciding whether to share, people deliberate on the appropriateness of sharing as a goal-attainment strategy. This notion is well aligned with social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973). The theory holds that the sharing of information proceeds and deepens depending on whether the people involved perceive that they are gaining benefits from the relationship. According to the sharing literature, one of the major benefits sought by sharing individuals is to gain social approval. Goffman (1974), for instance, reported that individuals engage in

interpersonal communication in order to present various aspects of the self. He explained that individuals do not communicate to merely pass information on to others, they also seek to put themselves in a positive light. The importance of gaining high regard from sharing was also captured in Chaudoir and Fisher's (2010) explanation of how individuals that are uncertain about the listener's reaction strategically engage in sharing. They wrote that "the disclosure event may unfold over a longer period of time. That is, some people may choose to "test the waters" with their confidant by first introducing the topic in a roundabout way and then come back to the topic later after determining whether the confidant is likely to react positively or negatively (p. 6)." These assertions find theoretical support, for example, in self-presentation theories (Baumeister, 1982), which hold that social approval is most people's default goal.

Consistent with these ideas, both early and recent investigations have found evidence supporting the important role that social approval and regard play in sharing. For example, Taylor, Altman, and Sorrentino's (1969) early work showed that social approval leads to longer and more intimate sharing. In that study, sharing participants received confederates' reactions in one of four possible forms: 1) continuous positive, 2) early negative, late positive, 3) continuous negative, or 4) early positive, late negative. As predicted by the authors, participants who received continuous positive or early negative-late positive feedback engaged in longer and deeper sharing. In a more recent study, MacGregor and Holmes (2011) demonstrated that people tend to avoid sharing with individuals from whom they expect to receive low approval. In support of such withholding of information, Corrigan and Matthews (2003) indicated that sharing stigmatized information (e.g., non-heterosexuality) may lead to social disapproval and, consequently, to detrimental effects on the discloser's self-esteem. Thus, as these studies indicate, the pursuit and maintenance of high regard are important aspects of sharing behavior.

Why is preoccupation with regard so influential for sharing? In the words of Solomon (1983, p. 323), “The individual's self-concept is largely a result of others' appraisals, both imagined and actual. It is essentially a projection of how one appears to others-seeing oneself as others do.” In other words, one's regard originates largely from other people's judgments. Therefore, it naturally follows that sharing (i.e., revealing to others important things related to oneself) is strongly influenced by people's concern about how others will regard them.

Do the effects of sharing on regard reach the consumer sphere? Existing research suggests that they do. In the words of Wojnicki and Godes (2008, p. 3), their research “provides compelling evidence that when consumers generate WOM, they are not simply communicating marketplace information, but also sharing something about themselves as individuals.” The authors found that consumers strategically choose what information to share in order to ensure self-enhancement. For instance, consumers who consider themselves experts (vs. non-experts) demonstrate a positivity bias by sharing satisfying (vs. dissatisfying) experiences more. The positive outcomes from their experiences serve as direct evidence of their expertise and aptitude.

Besides valence, the type of purchase shared may be influenced by people's concern with regard. Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, p. 1200) proposed that “because being “materialistic” is viewed negatively whereas being “experiential” is viewed positively, telling stories about experiences one has acquired may portray the storyteller in a more favorable light than telling stories about acquired possessions.” In light of this evidence, I hypothesize that:

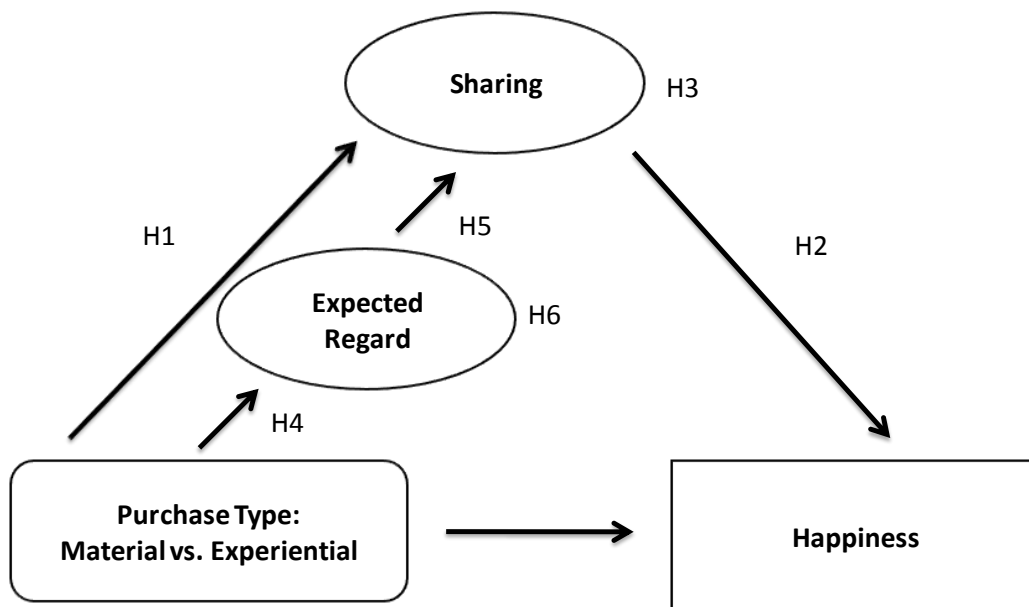
**H5:** Tellers' expectations for higher regard lead them to share experiential purchases more than material purchases.

By merging the literature leading to H4 and H5, I find support for the hypothesis that expected regard is likely to mediate the effect of purchase type on sharing. Specifically, I propose that expected regard is a factor responsible for people's higher inclination to share experiential (vs. material) purchases. Formally stated:

**H6:** Expected regard mediates the effect of purchase type on sharing.

In summary, Chapters 4 and 5 propose a mediated-mediation model, as shown in Figure 3. This model was subjected to six empirical tests. The details of these tests and of their results are presented next, in chapters 6 and 7.

Figure 3





## CHAPTER 6: EXPERIMENTS 1-4

Each of the first three experiments tests the two proposed mediations. In experiments 1 and 2, I adapted Van Boven and Gilovich's (2003) manipulation procedure of asking participants to recall and write about either a material or an experiential purchase that they had previously made, and to subsequently answer assessment measures (e.g., expected regard, sharing, happiness). Two potential rival explanations not addressed in experiment 1 motivated experiment 2. One is that people share experiences more than material goods not because of their concern for regard, as I hypothesize, but because experiences are intrinsically more social than material objects. Another is that, as previous literature suggests, people enjoy hearing about experiences (vs. material objects) more. Thus, one could argue that the higher inclination to share experiential (vs. material) purchases is motivated by the teller's expectation that the listener will enjoy it more. In experiment 2, besides testing and ruling out those two rival explanations, I also employed a more conservative manipulation that allowed me to subject the model to a stricter test.

In experiment 3, I addressed an important weakness present in both previous experiments. Namely, instead of letting participants freely choose the purchase they wished to recall and write about, which led to the comparison of greatly distinct purchases, I kept the focal purchase constant and asked participants to conceptualize it either as a material or experiential purchase.

In experiment 4, I examined the potential benefit of influencing people's inclination to share. I used a cuing manipulation to examine whether cuing participants with the idea of sharing would positively affect the inclination to share of those who 'most need it' (material purchasers).

Precisely, because experiential purchasers are naturally highly inclined to share, I expected (and found evidence) that material purchasers are the greatest beneficiaries of an influence to share. Consistent with this expectation, material (vs. experiential) purchasers who had been cued with sharing (vs. unrelated) displayed higher expectations for regard, higher inclination to share, and, consequently, greater levels of happiness.

## **Experiment 1**

### **Procedures**

To test hypotheses 1 through 6, I conducted an experiment with 95 college students who participated in exchange for class credit. I employed a manipulation similar to that in Van Boven and Gilovich (2003). First, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: material purchase versus experiential purchase. They were then asked to recall and write in detail about a personal purchase that reflected the condition they were in. The instructions also provided them with a brief description of what constitutes a material (or experiential) purchase. To control for extraneous effects that market value may cause, I restricted the purchase cost by asking participants to select a purchase in which they had spent about 50 dollars. Lastly, I followed Van Boven and Gilovich's (2003) procedure of instructing participants to focus their recall and writing on a purchase that had a positive outcome. The script of the instructions for the two conditions read:

Condition 1 (Material Purchase): "Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. You kept the object for some time and may even still have it. It was an

object that you could touch with your hand. You bought the object with the intention of advancing your happiness and enjoyment in life. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.”

Condition 2 (Experiential Purchase): “Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. In other words, you did not end up with anything tangible (anything you could hold in your hand) at the end of the experience except for your memories. You bought the experience with the intention of advancing your happiness and enjoyment in life. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.”

**Assessment of Sharing.** To measure sharing, I asked participants to answer six 7-point items (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree). They answered, for instance, “I would feel excited about sharing the details of my object/experience”, and “I would want to share with others the details of my object/experience.”

**Assessment of Happiness.** Participants rated their happiness on two 7-point scales (1 = Not at all; 7 = Very much) adopted from Van Boven and Gilovich (2003). The questions were, “When you think about this purchase, how happy does it make you?”, and “How much does this purchase contribute to your happiness in life?”

**Assessment of Expected Regard.** To measure expected regard, I asked participants to answer on a 7-point scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 7 = Strongly agree) the question, “I think the person listening to me would regard me more highly after learning about my object/experience.”

**Assessment of Control Variables.** Since it has been suggested in the literature that the consumption of life experiences may involve a higher level of social interaction than does the consumption of material objects (Caprariello and Reis, 2013; Howell and Hill, 2009; Van Boven, 2005; Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003), it becomes important to assess whether the recall and writing of experiential (vs. material) purchases make one's friendship connections more salient and, in turn, cause one to share experiences more. With such concern in mind, I asked participants, "How many close friends would you say you have?", and "With how many people (for example, friends, parents, intimate partner, strangers, etc.) do you often share aspects of your life?" Additionally, a scale on materialism (Richins, 1987) was used. This assessment allowed for the identification of consumers for whom material purchases are especially important versus especially unimportant (Nicolao et al., 2009). Even though random assignment is likely to prevent the predominance of an individual characteristic (e.g., materialism) in either of experimental conditions, it is still important to statistically examine the possibility that material purchases advance less happiness in participants in the material condition due to their lower level of materialism (i.e., people for whom material objects are unimportant).

After these assessments, participants were debriefed, thanked, and released from the experiment room.

## **Results**

**Reliability and Factor Analyses.** The reliability test on the happiness items indicated an alpha coefficient of .7, which meets the standard value for reliability recommended by Nunnally (1978) and, therefore, provides initial indication of the appropriateness of the measure. Similarly,

coefficients for the six items on sharing ( $\alpha = .85$ ), and four of the six items on materialism ( $\alpha = .78$ ) indicated high levels of internal consistency. Subsequent factor analyses showed that the items comprising the sharing and materialism scales loaded highly on single factors with Eigenvalues of 3.51 and 2.46, which accounted for 58.5% and 61.6% of the variance, respectively. Based on these results, these sets of items were averaged to create overall measures of happiness, sharing, and materialism.

**Sharing Mediation Analysis.** The results of this analysis supported hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Specifically, I conducted four regression analyses (*a-d*) and a bootstrap analysis of mediation with SPSS Macro from Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007) and found that (*a*) experiential purchases advanced significantly more happiness than did material purchases ( $\beta = .47, t = 1.99, p = .04$ ) (i.e., replicating Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003). Further, significant effects were found when (*b*) the mediator (i.e., sharing) was regressed on the IV (i.e., purchase type) ( $\beta = .64, t = 2.97, p = .003$ ) (i.e., supporting H1), and (*c*) the DV (i.e., happiness) was regressed on the mediator ( $\beta = .43, t = 4.33, p < .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H2). Importantly, (*d*) when happiness was regressed on both purchase type and sharing, the previously significant effect of purchase type on happiness became insignificant ( $\beta = .20, t = .90, p = .36$ ) (i.e., supporting H3). In line with this, the bootstrap test with 10,000 resamples (the number of resamples used in all analyses hereafter) supported the mediating role of sharing in the relation between purchase type and happiness ( $\beta = .18, CI (95\%) = .02, .33$ ). As hypothesized, these results suggest that 1) people are more inclined to share about experiential (vs. material) purchases (H1), 2) sharing positively affects happiness (H2), and 3) sharing mediates the effect of purchase type on happiness (H3).

To investigate sharing's effect further I ran a regression using split file for material versus experiential purchases. Results showed that, for material purchases, sharing significantly affected happiness ( $\beta = .59, t = 4.36, p < .001$ ). For experiential purchases, however, sharing did not have a significant effect on happiness ( $\beta = .22, t = 1.42, p = .16$ ).

**Expected Regard Mediation Analysis.** The results of this analysis supported hypotheses 4, 5, and 6. Precisely, I performed four regressions similar to those reported above and found that (a) purchase type (i.e., the IV) exerted a significant effect on sharing (i.e., the mediator in the previous analysis that now operates as the DV) ( $\beta = .64, t = 2.97, p = .003$ ). Moreover, (b) purchase type significantly affected expected regard (i.e., the mediator) ( $\beta = .46, t = 1.98, p = .05$ ) (i.e., supporting H4), and (c) expected regard had a significant effect on sharing ( $\beta = .32, t = 3.54, p = .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H5). Revealingly, (d) when both purchase type and expected regard were included in the model, the relation between purchase type and sharing was attenuated ( $\beta = .51, t = 2.42, p = .01$ ) (i.e., supporting H6). Finally, the bootstrap analysis supported the indirect effect of purchase type on sharing through expected regard ( $\beta = .14, CI(95\%) = .005, .39$ ). As proposed, these results indicate that 1) people associated with experiential (vs. material) purchases expect to be more positively regarded (H4), 2) expected regard influences the type of purchase people are more inclined to share (H5), and 3) expected regard mediates the effect of purchase type on sharing (H6).

**Control Variables: Friendship Numbers and Materialism.** To examine whether recalling and writing about an experiential (vs. a material) purchase made friendships more salient, which may cause participants in that condition to report higher values for sharing, I asked

participants to indicate the number of close friends they have and the number of people with whom they usually share about aspects of their lives. Results indicated no significant difference between the number of close friends reported by participants in the material purchase condition ( $M = 13.44$ ) and those in the experiential purchase condition ( $M = 8.50$ ,  $F(1, 94) = 1.28$ ,  $p = .26$ ). Similarly, the number of people with whom participants in the material purchase condition often share ( $M = 32.26$ ) was not significantly different from that of participants in the experiential purchase condition ( $M = 12.76$ ,  $F(1,94) = .72$ ,  $p = .39$ ). These results suggest that the concepts of material versus experiential purchases and one's social network are not strongly linked in the consumer mind.

Additionally, an ANOVA with purchase type as the IV and materialism as the DV did not show a significant difference between the two conditions ( $F(1,94) = .04$ ,  $p = .83$ ).

## Discussion

Taken together, the sharing mediation and the expected regard mediation analyses support the following scenario: Experiential purchases are better than material purchases at advancing happiness (replicating Van Boven and Gilovich (2003)), and sharing mediates that effect. People's greater tendency to share about experiential (vs. material) purchases is, in turn, explained by the expectation that they will be more highly regarded by sharing the details of their life experiences (vs. material objects). Hence, the results of experiment 1 provide initial empirical support to the proposed mediated-mediation model (Figure 3).

Because experiential purchases may not be equivalent on relevant dimensions with material purchases, questions about the underlying cause of the observed differences in sharing

and happiness may be raised. I empirically investigated materialism and psychological links with friendship networks. Next, I will discuss several issues that I did not empirically investigate regarding possible differences between experiential and material purchases: the extent to which the purchases are hedonic (vs. utilitarian), discretionary (vs. necessary), costly, unique, and the degree to which the purchase is consumed socially.

### **Additional Possible Differences between Material and Experiential Purchases**

**Hedonic versus Utilitarian.** Whereas common sense may lead one to expect that hedonic purchases advance more happiness because of their ability to provide pleasure (a strong source of happiness, according to the hedonistic school—Epicurus; Kahneman, Diener, and Schwarz, 1999), utilitarian purchases often provide the individual with the sense of accomplishment and fulfillment of her potentials (also primary sources of happiness, according to the eudaimonic school—Aristotle; Ryff and Keyes, 1995). Thus, research is needed to clarify whether hedonists or eudaimonics can help us determine the ability of hedonic versus utilitarian purchases to advance happiness.

With regards to this dissertation, the script of experiment 1 asked participants to write about a material or an experiential purchase that was made “with the intention of advancing your happiness and enjoyment in life. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.” Thus, it seems likely that the task instructions focused attention on hedonic purchases. This, however, should not be taken as a conclusive claim, as the current analyses do allow for it. Further research is therefore called for in order to more closely examine this question.



**Necessary versus Discretionary Purchases.** This point has partially been addressed by Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, study 2). The researchers examined a dataset from a national survey with 1,279 Americans and found that respondents' income level influenced the level of happiness they obtained from experiential (vs. material) purchases. Specifically, people with the lowest income levels (i.e., those whose purchases are mostly necessities) indicated that material and experiential purchases made them equally happy. The authors reasoned that, "Individuals with little or no discretionary income (typically those with the least education) must allocate most of their resources toward the satisfaction of basic needs, and may have fewer opportunities to worry about the relative benefits of experiences and possessions in the pursuit of happiness (p. 1196)." Thus, according to this explanation, the superiority of experiential over material purchases in advancing happiness is limited to those able to afford discretionary purchases. In terms of this dissertation, the script of experiment 1 intentionally focused participants' recollection and descriptions on discretionary purchases. Thus, differences along the necessity/discretionary continuum are unlikely to account for the results reported here.

With that said, potentially fruitful and yet-unexplored contexts in which to study this dimension are underdeveloped (e.g., Morocco, Senegal) and developing countries (e.g., Brazil, Mexico). These contexts could possibly provide valuable opportunities to learn about how a society's economic and cultural developments influence people's ability to extract benefits from different types of purchases.

**Differential Costs.** For numerous reasons (e.g., status, quality), it is possible that higher priced purchases advance more happiness than do lower priced ones. In order to control for market value, I established in the instructions that the experiential and material purchases

participants should recall and write about must have cost about \$50. A similar approach was used by Carter and Gilovich (2010, study 1; value of \$50), Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, study 1; value > \$100) and Nicolao, Irwin, and Goodman (2009, study 1; value of \$300). All these investigations consistently found that experiences advance more happiness than do objects. Carter and Gilovich (2010, study 2) also tested their hypotheses related to experiential versus material purchases without setting a value for the purchases. By later assessing the cost of the purchase, they found that the cost of the experiential and material purchases recalled by participants did not significantly differ ( $t < 1$ ). Similarly, Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, study 2) reported that the data from a national survey yielded no difference in cost of experiential and material purchases respondents recalled. Based on previous literature and the design of the present study, I maintain that differential costs do not pose a threat to the validity of my results.

**Uniqueness and Scarcity.** Research by Rosenzweig and Gilovich (2012) indicated that experiences are seen as more singular than objects. The authors found that, as a result, people tend to experience regret of action when it comes to material purchases (buyer's remorse) and regret of inaction when it comes to experiential purchases (missed opportunities).

When integrated with the ideas in this dissertation, this finding has the potential to explain why people expect to be more highly regarded by sharing about their experiences than about their objects. Precisely, talking about more unique topics (i.e., experiences) is naturally more interesting and likely to put oneself under a positive light.

**Sociality of Consumption.** Caprariello and Reis (2013) have recently published their findings that experiences are inherently more social and that this accounts for the observed

superiority of experiences in advancing happiness. However, I have reason to suspect the generalizability of this result. As reported in the Results section of my experiment 1, participants in the experiential (vs. material) condition did not report having more friends nor sharing, in their daily lives, with a greater number of people. This finding could be interpreted as evidence that experiences are not, by nature, more social (otherwise people in the experiential condition would likely be cued with sociality and would likely report having more friends and sharing with more people).

Even though these results provide some evidence against the sociality explanation offered by Caprariello and Reis (2013), more conclusive claims can only be made with a study in which the solo versus social aspect of the purchase is experimentally controlled. In experiment 2, I experimentally manipulate solo versus social and provide definite evidence against this potential rival explanation.

I now turn to experiment 2, which addresses two possible alternative explanations, and tests the proposed model with a stricter manipulation. One of the possible rival explanations concerns the enjoyment the teller expects the listener to gain from the conversation. The other relates to the possibility that experiential purchases are shared more because, compared to material purchases, they are inherently more social (Caprariello and Reis, 2013; Howell and Hill, 2009). With regards to the stricter manipulation, experiment 2 allowed participants to recall purchases that were made for a variety of reasons (vs. to advance happiness and enjoyment in life—experiment 1) and that may have turned out less than perfectly (vs. purchases that turned out well—experiment 1).

## Experiment 2

The main goal of experiment 2 was to distinguish between solo and social purchases and, in turn, investigate the possible rival explanation that experiential purchases are shared more because they are inherently more social. Distinguishing between solo and social purchases constitutes a refinement of the conceptualization of purchases, which can offer additional insights into the proposed model.

The manipulation of solo versus social purchases allowed me to identify whether controlling for the sociality of the purchase would eliminate the superiority of experiential over material purchases in leading to more sharing and in advancing more happiness. Specifically, the goal was to test whether that superiority materializes in the social condition (when experiences may still be more social than objects) and, more important, in the solo condition (when the sociality level of both purchases was kept constant, at zero). If the rival explanation were to hold, we would observe neither a direct effect of purchase type on happiness nor an indirect effect through sharing in the solo purchase condition (because the sociality level of both purchases was held constant, at zero). It is possible, however, that we would still observe a direct effect of purchase type on happiness and an indirect effect through sharing in the social purchase condition (because the social experiences recalled and written by experiential participants may still have a higher sociality level than did the social objects recalled and written by material participants).

The second goal of the present experiment was to entertain another potential rival explanation for why people share experiential (vs. material) purchases more—i.e., expectation for listener's enjoyment. This factor derived from research by Van Boven, Campbell, and

Gilovich (2010). In that work, the authors found that people reported greater enjoyment from hearing about experiential (vs. material) purchases. Thus, it is possible that tellers share about experiences more than about material objects not (only) because they expect to be more positively regarded but (also) because they expect the listener to enjoy the conversation more. If this rival explanation is true, we should observe that teller's expectation about listener's enjoyment mediates the effect of purchase type on sharing.

The final goal of experiment 2 was to test the proposed model again, but under a stricter circumstance. I did so by not limiting participants' descriptions to positive purchases only. Whereas experiment 1 specified the purchase by instructing, "You bought the object/experience with the intention of advancing your happiness and enjoyment in life. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase.", experiment 2 did not give such instruction. Participants, therefore, were free to describe purchases that 1) had been made for a wider set of reasons (not only to advance happiness and enjoyment in life), and that 2) turned out anywhere on the negative to positive spectrum.

## **Procedures**

One hundred and twenty-four college students participated in experiment 2, which used a 2 (purchase type: material vs. experiential) x 2 (sociality level: solo vs. social) between-subjects design. The manipulation was modeled after that in experiment 1, except 1) for the previously mentioned section of the manipulation script, which was excluded, and 2) for the additional manipulation of whether the purchase was consumed solo versus socially. The manipulation instructions in each of the four conditions read as follows:

Condition 1 (Material—Solo): Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. You kept the object for some time and may even still have it. It was an object that you could touch with your hand. You used/consumed this object by yourself, not with anybody else.

Condition 2 (Material—Social): Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. You kept the object for some time and may even still have it. It was an object that you could touch with your hand. You used/consumed this object together with other people whom you knew or became acquainted with during the use/enjoyment of the object.

Condition 3 (Experiential—Solo): Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. In other words, you did not end up with anything tangible (anything you could hold in your hand) at the end of the experience except for your memories. You had that experience by yourself, not with anybody else.

Condition 4 (Experiential—Social): Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. In other words, you did not end up with anything tangible (anything you could hold in your hand) at the end of the experience except for your memories. You had that experience together with other people whom you knew or became acquainted with during the use/enjoyment of the experience.

After writing about the purchase, participants answered, on 7-point scales, questions similar to those in experiment 1, designed to assess expected regard (i.e., I think the person listening to me would regard me more highly after learning about my object/experience), sharing (e.g., I would feel excited about sharing the details of my object/experience), happiness (e.g., When you think about that purchase, how happy does it make you?), and expectation for listener's enjoyment (i.e., I think the person listening to me would enjoy doing so.).

## Results

In all analyses, two participants were excluded for not completing a substantial portion of the questionnaire (including the measures of interest—i.e., happiness, sharing, expected regard) and five others were removed due to not following instructions. Importantly, the mediation results reported hereafter would not be negatively affected by the inclusion of these five participants.

**Reliability.** The reliability test on the sharing and happiness items yielded alpha coefficients of .58 and .68 respectively. In spite of the low internal consistency, I decided to retain the items since the high internal consistencies found in the other experiments presented here serve as checks for this potential limitation. I thus averaged them to create overall measures of sharing and happiness.

**Mediation Analyses.** The data indicated that sharing mediates the effect of purchase type on happiness, irrespective of whether I evaluate solo and social purchases together or individually. They also showed that expected regard mediates the effect of purchase type on sharing. Last, they revealed that expectation for listener's enjoyment does not mediate the effect of purchase type on sharing.

To arrive at these results, I conducted three sets of analyses: First, I performed a sharing mediation, an expected regard mediation, and a listener's enjoyment mediation on the complete dataset—i.e., without distinguishing between the solo and social conditions (herein called, 'solo

and social analyses'). This gave me the opportunity to test whether experiment 1's results would replicate under experiment 2's stricter manipulation. It also allowed for the study of the potential alternative explanation related to listener's enjoyment.

Second, I ran two additional sets of analyses, a sharing mediation and an expected regard mediation looking at the solo conditions only (herein called, 'solo analyses'), and a sharing mediation and an expected regard mediation looking at the social conditions only (herein called, 'social analyses'). These two sets of analyses enabled me to investigate the soundness of the alternative explanation associated with the potentially higher sociality of experiences. That is, I sought to answer the question, "If I control for the sociality of the purchases, will people still share about experiences more than about material objects?" Additionally, these analyses allowed me to study whether expected regard explains why people share about solo and social experiences more than about solo and social material objects, respectively. Lastly, I ran a moderated-mediation analysis on the complete data set to formally test whether solo versus social moderates the sharing mediation.

***Solo and social analyses.*** The following three analyses included the complete dataset without distinguishing between solo and social purchases.

***Sharing mediation analysis.*** The results supported hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Similar to experiment 1, I again conducted four regression tests (*a-d*) and a bootstrap test of mediation. I found (*a*) that participants in the experiential (vs. material) purchase condition reported significantly higher levels of happiness ( $\beta = .51, t = 2.24, p = .02$ ), (*b*) that they were more inclined to share experiential (vs. material) purchases ( $\beta = .71, t = 3.45, p = .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H1), and (*c*) that sharing increased happiness ( $\beta = .49, t = 5.42, p < .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H2). Importantly, (*d*) by including sharing in the model, I found that the previously



significant effect of purchase type on happiness was reduced to insignificance ( $\beta = .18, t = .83, p = .40$ ) (i.e., supporting H3). Results of the bootstrap test supported the mediation of sharing in the effect of purchase type on happiness ( $\beta = .32, CI(95\%) = .15, .59$ ). These results parallel those of experiment 1, showing that 1) experiential purchases lead to more sharing than do material purchases (H1), 2) happiness benefits from sharing (H2), and 3) sharing explains why people draw more happiness from experiences than from material objects (H3).

To further understand sharing's effect I conducted a regression using split file for material versus experiential purchases. Findings indicated that, in the material purchase condition, sharing had a significant influence on happiness ( $\beta = .30, t = 2.40, p = .02$ ). This influence of sharing on happiness also replicated in the experiential purchase condition ( $\beta = .63, t = 4.53, p < .001$ ). Hence, higher sharing of both material and experiential purchases is beneficial for happiness.

*Expected regard mediation analysis.* The findings were in line with hypotheses 4, 5, and 6. By performing the same set of four regression analyses as I did in experiment 1, I found that (a) people reported higher sharing for experiential (vs. material) purchases ( $\beta = .71, t = 3.45, p < .001$ ), (b) they expected to be more highly regarded if they were linked to experiential (vs. material) purchases ( $\beta = .80, t = 2.83, p = .005$ ) (i.e., supporting H4), and (c) expected regard explained a large variance in sharing ( $\beta = .47, t = 8.98, p < .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H5). Tellingly, (d) the effect of purchase type on sharing was substantially attenuated ( $\beta = .35, t = 2.08, p = .03$ ) when expected regard was included in the model (i.e., supporting H6). This attenuation was significant and expected regard mediated the effect of purchase type on sharing, as shown by the bootstrap analysis ( $\beta = .35, CI(95\%) = .11, .64$ ). In summary, this evidences that 1) experiential people have higher expectations for how others will see them (H4), 2) that, in turn, motivates

them to share more, compared to material people (H5), and 3) expectation for higher regard helps illustrate why individuals tend to tell others about their experiential (vs. material) purchases more (H6).

*Listener's enjoyment analysis.* The data did not support the alternative explanation concerning listener's enjoyment. Specifically, (a) participants were more inclined to share experiential (vs. material) purchases ( $\beta = .71, t = 3.45, p < .001$ ), (b) those in the experiential and material purchase conditions did not significantly differ in their expectations for listeners' enjoyment ( $\beta = .17, t = .72, p = .47$ ), (c) expectation for listeners' enjoyment influenced sharing ( $\beta = .25, t = 3.20, p = .001$ ), and (d) the effect of purchase type on sharing was only slightly attenuated when listeners' enjoyment was added to the analysis ( $\beta = .67, t = 3.36, p = .001$ ). Importantly, the bootstrap analysis converged with my expectation that listeners' enjoyment does not mediate the effect of purchase type on sharing ( $\beta = .04, CI(95\%) = -.06, .19$ ). Hence, these data signal that people's higher inclination to share experiential versus material purchases is not explained by a potential expectation that listeners will draw greater enjoyment from hearing about the former.

To further explore the possible role of sociality of the consumption, the entire mediated-mediation model was tested separately under each condition: solo and social.

*Solo analyses.* The next two analyses included only about half of the dataset. That is, the solo-material and solo-experiential conditions.

*Sharing mediation analysis.* The data supported hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. From the four regression analyses I found (a) a marginally significant effect of purchase type on happiness ( $\beta = .46, t = 1.40, p = .16$ ), (b) significant effects of purchase type on sharing ( $\beta = .88, t = 2.92, p = .005$ ) (i.e., supporting H1), and (c) of sharing on happiness ( $\beta = .39, t = 3.17, p = .002$ ) (i.e.,

supporting H2). Importantly, (d) when both purchase type and sharing were placed in the regression analysis, the previously marginally significant effect of purchase type on happiness dropped to insignificance ( $\beta = .12, t = .38, p = .70$ ) (i.e., supporting H3). Consistent with this, the bootstrap analysis supported the mediating role of sharing ( $\beta = .32, CI(95\%) = .10, .72$ ). These results demonstrate that in the case of solo purchases 1) people are more inclined to share solo experiences than solo material objects (H1), 2) sharing positively influences happiness (H2), and 3) sharing mediates the effect of (solo) purchase type on happiness (H3).

*Expected regard mediation analysis.* The findings were consistent with hypotheses 4, 5, and 6. I found that (a) people were more inclined to share experiential (vs. material) purchases ( $\beta = .88, t = 2.92, p = .005$ ), (b) those associated with experiential (vs. material) purchases expected, at a marginally significant level, to be more positively regarded ( $\beta = .81, t = 1.89, p = .06$ ) (i.e., supporting H4), (c) this expectation for regard was positively associated with sharing ( $\beta = .46, t = 6.26, p < .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H5), and (d) the effect of purchase type on sharing was attenuated ( $\beta = .54, t = 2.14, p = .03$ ) when expected regard was included in the model (i.e., supporting H6). The result of the bootstrap analysis added support to the mediating role of expected regard ( $\beta = .34, CI(95\%) = .007, .75$ ). Thus, these findings reveal that 1) people associated with solo experiences expect to be more highly regarded than those associated with solo material objects (H4), 2) this expectation leads them to be more inclined to share (H5), and 3) expected regard mediates the relation between (solo) purchase type and sharing (H6).

*Social analyses.* The subsequent two analyses considered roughly half of the dataset. Namely, the two social conditions (material and experiential).

*Sharing mediation analysis.* Results were in line with hypotheses 1, 2, and 3. Particularly, findings showed (a) a marginally significant effect of purchase type on happiness ( $\beta = .57, t =$

1.77,  $p = .08$ ), (b) a marginally significant effect of purchase type on sharing ( $\beta = .52$ ,  $t = 1.92$ ,  $p = .059$ ) (i.e., supporting H1), and (c) a significant effect of sharing on happiness ( $\beta = .59$ ,  $t = 4.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H2). Interestingly, (d) when both purchase type and sharing were included in the analysis, the effect of purchase type was reduced to insignificance ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $t = .94$ ,  $p = .35$ ) (i.e., supporting H3). Likewise, the bootstrap analysis yielded further support to the sharing mediation ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $CI(95\%) = .04, .70$ ). These findings hold that 1) people are more inclined to share social experiences than social material objects (H1), 2) sharing leads to greater happiness (H2), and 3) sharing mediates the effect of (social) purchase type on happiness (H3).

*Expected regard mediation analysis.* The findings supported hypotheses 4, 5, and 6. They indicated that (a) people were marginally more inclined to share experiential (vs. material) purchases ( $\beta = .52$ ,  $t = 1.92$ ,  $p = .059$ ), (b) purchase type had a significant influence on expected regard ( $\beta = .78$ ,  $t = 2.21$ ,  $p = .03$ ) (i.e., supporting H4), and (c) expected regard predicted a significant portion of the variance in sharing ( $\beta = .47$ ,  $t = 5.88$ ,  $p < .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H5). Revealingly, (d) the previously marginally significant effect of purchase type on sharing became insignificant ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $t = .71$ ,  $p = .47$ ) when expected regard was added to the analysis (i.e., supporting H6). Additionally, the bootstrap test provided support for the expected regard mediation ( $\beta = .36$ ,  $CI(95\%) = .05, .77$ ). In sum, this body of evidence indicates that 1) people associated with social experiential (vs. material) purchases expect to be more highly regarded (H4), 2) this in turn leads them to be more inclined to share the purchase with others (H5), and expected regard mediates the effect of (social) purchase type on sharing (H6).

*Moderated-mediation analysis.* To examine whether the proposed sharing mediation is qualified by the sociality of the purchase, I ran three sets of analyses below. The first focuses on happiness, the second on sharing, and the third on the sharing mediation.

*Happiness.* Results of a 2-way ANOVA showed a significant main effect of purchase type, demonstrating that in general experiential purchases generated more happiness ( $M = 4.89$ ) than did material purchases ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $F(1, 116) = 5.03$ ,  $p = .027$ ). Additionally, there was a marginally significant influence of sociality, suggesting that, in general, social purchases advanced more happiness ( $M = 4.83$ ) than did solo purchases ( $M = 4.44$ ,  $F(1, 116) = 2.96$ ,  $p = .088$ ). On the other hand, the data yielded an insignificant interaction between purchase type and sociality on happiness ( $F(1, 116) = .057$ ,  $p = .81$ ). These results indicate that the effect of purchase type on happiness is not qualified by the sociality of the purchase.

*Sharing.* The pattern of results observed for the dependent variable (happiness) was also found for the proposed mediator (sharing) when sharing is used as a DV. Precisely, the data showed a main effect of purchase type on sharing, suggesting that participants in the experiential purchase condition were in general more inclined to share ( $M = 4.63$ ) than participants in the material purchase condition ( $M = 3.92$ ,  $F(1, 116) = 11.87$ ,  $p = .001$ ). They also showed a marginally significant effect of sociality on sharing ( $M_{solo} = 4.09$  vs.  $M_{social} = 4.47$ ,  $F(1, 116) = 3.42$ ,  $p = .067$ ). The interaction of purchase type by sociality on sharing was, however, statistically insignificant ( $F(1, 116) = .78$ ,  $p = .37$ ). These results demonstrate that the effect of purchase type on sharing is not qualified by the sociality of the purchase.

*Mediation analysis.* The first regression analysis included purchase type, sociality, and their interaction as independent variables and happiness as dependent variable. As shown on the above ANOVA, the interaction of purchase type by sociality was insignificant ( $\beta = .11$ ,  $t = .23$ ,  $p = .81$ ). The second regression analysis included the same independent variables. As dependent variable, however, it included the proposed mediator “sharing”. Similar to the result reported under “sharing” above, the data yielded an insignificant interaction effect of purchase type by

sociality ( $\beta = -.36$ ,  $t = -.88$ ,  $p = .37$ ). This lack of a significant interaction effect on the proposed mediator “sharing” suggests the lack of a moderated-mediation effect. Consistent with this, when I included the mediator in the model, I found that the insignificance of the interaction of purchase type by sociality remained essentially intact ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $t = .64$ ,  $p = .51$ ). The result of the bootstrap analysis supported the absence of a moderated-mediation effect ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $CI(95\%) = -.53, 1.10$ ). These results determine that the sharing mediation is not moderated by the sociality of the purchase.

## Discussion

Experiment 2 generates three important outcomes. First, it shows that sharing mediates the effect of purchase type on happiness even when sociality is held constant. Precisely, people are inclined to share experiences more than material objects, whether the consumption/enjoyment was solo or social. Relatedly, this higher inclination to share experiential purchases explains why those purchases make people happier than do material ones. Thus, these results replicate those of experiment 1 and, importantly, demonstrate that when material and experiential purchases have similar sociality levels, people are still more inclined to share about their experiences, which in turn explains why they gain more happiness from those experiences (vs. objects).

These results partially contradict previous works’ showing that experiences make people happier because they are inherently more social than objects (Caprariello and Reis, 2013; Howell and Hill, 2009). In fact, my data establish that, experiences are superior to objects even when there is no sociality.

Since the mediator (sharing) explains happiness levels, exploring it is a good starting point to deliberate further on these findings. In doing so, I will tackle the question: Why is it that, even at zero sociality level, people still share about experiences more? As my data indicate, expected regard explains why people tell others about their experiences more than about their objects. Hence, irrespective of how the experience and object were originally enjoyed or consumed, people still perceive experiences as better able to put them under a positive light.

The finding that sharing is uninfluenced by sociality is however not new in the literature. Gable et al. (2004, study 1) found that nonsocial events are talked about just as much as social events.

Going beyond the above discussion, it is still possible that in the real world experiential purchases involve more social interaction than do material purchases. In other words, the higher sociality of experiential purchases may indeed constitute a helping factor in its superiority to advance happiness. Experiment 2's findings, however, show that experiential purchases' superiority materializes even in the absence of such factor.

In terms of experiment 2's second important outcome, the evidence demonstrates that, irrespective of whether the purchase is a solo or social one, expected regard (and not listener's enjoyment) explains why people tend to tell others about their life experiences than their material objects. That is, people tend to share solo and social experiences more than solo and social material objects because they expect to be regarded more positively by those listening to them.

Finally, experiment 2 allowed for the test of the proposed mediated-mediation model with a stricter procedure than that used in experiment 1. Here, the model's hypotheses receive support even with purchases that were not necessarily acquired with the goal of advancing happiness and enjoyment in life, and that may have resulted in less-than-perfect outcomes. This

pattern of results thus adds credence to the soundness of the proposed model and allows for a greater generalizability in the universe of purchases.

Although these results support the relations hypothesized in the model, an important limitation present in experiments 1 and 2 relates to the nature of the purchases described by participants. Namely, because participants were given the freedom to recall and write about a purchase of their choice, the analyses made comparisons that may be deemed nonequivalent (e.g., experiential purchase (e.g., a movie at the theater) vs. material purchase (e.g., a new watch)). To address this limitation, I used a substantially different procedure in experiment 3.

### **Experiment 3**

The primary objective of experiment 3 was to address the above-mentioned limitation present in experiments 1 and 2. With that aim, I held the focal purchase (i.e., BBQ grill) constant in the present experiment. If the sharing and expected regard mediations are observed in this experiment, results will definitively rule out alternative explanations associated with characteristics of material versus experiential purchases. In addition, these data allow me to take a practitioner's perspective and investigate potential marketing implications of this dissertation. Precisely, keeping the purchase constant and manipulating only the way consumers construct that purchase in their minds (i.e., as an experience vs. an object), enables the tackling of the question: By motivating consumers to see a purchase as an experience (vs. object), can marketers influence amount of sharing and, in turn, consumer happiness?

An additional goal of experiment 3 was to test the model with a more diverse population than that used in the previous two experiments. The use of a more diverse population allows for



the examination of whether the findings extend beyond samples comprised of undergraduate students, who are unique in various aspects (i.e., relatively wealthier, more educated, younger, and, importantly, highly socially connected).

The final aim of experiment 3 was to identify whether time constitutes a confound in the effect of purchase type on happiness. As previous research has shown, experiential purchases' superiority in advancing happiness is particularly powerful with the passage of time (Nicolao et al., 2009). To address this possibility, I measured the length of time that has passed since participants made the purchase.

## **Procedures**

Forty-eight individuals from Mturk participated in this study in exchange for cash payment. Of those, 21 were male. The average age of the sample population was 34 years (ranging from 18 to 67).

On MTurk's page, participants were provided with the link to the online questionnaire. The questionnaire was programmed so that each participant was randomly assigned to one of two conditions: BBQ grill framed as an object versus BBQ grill framed as an experience. The former was designed to motivate participants to think and write about their BBQ grill in terms of its material properties, whereas the latter aimed at motivating them to think and write about it in terms of its experiential properties. Respectively, participants in the two conditions read:

Condition 1 (Material): In this study, we would like you to please recall a time when you bought a BBQ grill. You kept that object for some time and may still have it. In some detail, please describe that object.

Condition 2 (Experiential): In this study, we would like you to please recall a time when you bought a BBQ grill. You used it for some time and may still use it. In some detail, please describe the experience of using it.

Next, I used 7-point scales to assess expected regard (i.e., “I think the person listening to me would regard me more highly after learning about my grill.”), sharing (e.g., “I would want to talk to others about my grill.”), and happiness (e.g., “When you think about that grill, how happy does it make you?”). Finally, to measure time of ownership, participants indicated the number of years they have owned the grill.

## Results

**Reliability.** I conducted reliability tests on the two sharing and two happiness items and respectively found .93 and .81 for coefficient alphas. Based on these high levels of internal consistency, the two items of each measure were averaged to create overall measures of sharing and happiness.

**Sharing Mediation Analysis.** Hypothesis 1, 2, and 3 were supported by the results. Surprisingly, the analyses showed (a) an insignificant direct effect of purchase type on happiness ( $\beta = .37, t = .82, p = .41$ ). As expected, I found that (b) purchase type had a significant impact on sharing ( $\beta = 1.01, t = 2.22, p = .03$ ) (i.e., supporting H1), and that (c) sharing significantly affected happiness ( $\beta = .48, t = 3.96, p > .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H2). Revealingly, (d) when both purchase type and sharing were included in the analysis, the effect of purchase type on happiness was noticeably attenuated ( $\beta = -.12, t = -.30, p = .76$ ) (i.e., supporting H3). The bootstrap results

further supported the mediating role of sharing ( $\beta = .51$ ,  $CI(95\%) = .05, 1.28$ ). As expected, this set of analyses suggests that 1) people are more inclined to tell others about their BBQ grill when they construct it in experiential (vs. material) terms (H1), 2) sharing positively affects happiness (H2), and 3) sharing mediates the effect of purchase type on happiness (H3) (but only an indirect-only mediation, which I discuss further below).

To examine further the effect of sharing purchases that are framed in material and experiential terms, I ran a regression looking at each purchase type separately. Results showed that sharing significantly affected happiness in both the material purchase condition ( $\beta = .41$ ,  $t = 2.06$ ,  $p = .05$ ) and in the experiential purchase condition ( $\beta = .58$ ,  $t = 3.50$ ,  $p = .002$ ). These results illustrate that higher sharing of both materially- and experientially-framed purchases is associated with higher levels of happiness.

**Expected Regard Mediation Analysis.** The results of this analysis had mixed support for hypotheses 4, 5, and 6. I conducted a similar set of four regressions (*a-d*) and found that purchase type was (*a*) a significant predictor of sharing ( $\beta = 1.01$ ,  $t = 2.22$ ,  $p = .03$ ), (*b*) but not a significant predictor of expected regard ( $\beta = .78$ ,  $t = 1.56$ ,  $p = .12$ ) (i.e., providing mixed support for H4). Moreover, (*c*) expected regard was a significant predictor of sharing ( $\beta = .58$ ,  $t = 5.59$ ,  $p > .001$ ) (i.e., supporting H5). Finally, (*d*) when I included both purchase type and expected regard in the model, the effect of purchase type on sharing was reduced ( $\beta = .57$ ,  $t = 1.54$ ,  $p = .13$ ). The bootstrap analysis however did not support the expected regard mediation ( $\beta = .42$ ,  $CI(95\%) = -.04, 1.09$ ) (i.e., not supporting H6). Thus, the evidence for the expected regard mediation is not fully consistent with the previous two experiments. H4 and H5 were supported, but H6 (the mediation) was not supported.

**Time of Ownership Analysis.** The results of an ANOVA analysis indicated that participants who were asked to frame the purchase in material ( $M = 4.88$  years) and those asked to frame it in experiential terms ( $M = 3.17$  years,  $F(1, 47) = 2.47, p = .12$ ) did not significantly differ in the length of time they have owned it. In addition, a regression analysis with purchase type and time of ownership as IVs and happiness as DV yielded insignificant effects of purchase type ( $\beta = -.03, t = -.05, p = .95$ ), time of ownership ( $\beta = -.09, t = -1.29, p = .20$ ), and the interaction between purchase type and time of ownership ( $\beta = .07, t = .58, p = .55$ ). Hence, it is unlikely that time of ownership influenced the effects of purchase type on happiness through sharing.

## Discussion

When people construct a purchase in experiential (vs. material) terms, the results of experiment 3 show that they display a greater inclination to share about the purchase with others. Importantly, findings also indicate that sharing mediates the purchase's positive effect on happiness. In addition, people expect to be viewed more favorably when associated with purchases that are framed experientially (vs. materialistically). However, the expected regard mediation was not supported by the bootstrap analysis. It is possible that the lack of significance for the expected regard mediation is because the purchase was held constant. Specifically, using a material object (i.e., BBQ grill) in both purchase type conditions may have excluded important characteristics that are particular to experiential purchases (those that, after its enjoyment, the individual is left with nothing except for her memories of the lived events). This idea finds

support in the effect of purchase type on expected regard, which does not reach conventional levels of significance ( $p = .12$ ).

Experiment 3's results provide additional support to the sharing mediation hypothesized in the proposed model. They also address the limitation of experiments 1 and 2 related to lack of control over the nature of purchases recalled and described by participants. Furthermore, they illustrate an important implication of this dissertation for practitioners—i.e., that the apparently simple strategy of encouraging consumers to frame a purchase in experiential terms (e.g., “Experience what it is to prepare the perfect meat”) versus material terms (e.g., “Get all the functionalities and elegance you have always expected from a grill”) has the potential to affect how consumers expect to be regarded by others when they talk about the purchase, their inclination to share about the purchase, and, ultimately, the amount of happiness they draw from it.

Of note, the sharing mediation found in this study falls under the category of indirect-only mediation (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen, 2010). In other words, I find an indirect effect going through sharing (X-M-Y) but not a direct effect of purchase type on happiness (X-Y). In illustrating this type of mediation, Zhao et al. (2010, p. 200) explained, “the XY test is never relevant to establishing mediation. Researchers should not give up on a mediation hypothesis when they fail to find an “effect to be mediated.” It may well be possible to establish an indirect effect despite no total effect.” Further, they added that, “The one and only requirement to demonstrate mediation is a significant indirect effect  $a \times b$  by a Sobel test, or, as we will explain later, by a superior bootstrap test (Preacher and Hayes, 2004, 2008).”

Interestingly, the indirect-only mediation found in experiment 3 provides insight on the directionality of the sharing mediation model. Precisely, since sharing is self-reported rather than

manipulated, the data from experiments 1 and 2 may also be interpreted as consistent with reversed causality—i.e., the argument that happiness may explain the effect of purchase type on sharing. But this argument is inconsistent with the data from experiment 3 because, higher sharing of experiential purchases exists even though happiness was unaffected by purchase type. This, in turn, strengthens the argument that purchase type (experiential or material) directly influences sharing, which in turn influences happiness.

In light of this indirect-only mediation, it is opportune to consider why a direct effect of purchase type on happiness was not observed in experiment 3. A possible explanation for the lack of a statistically significant direct effect concerns the noise that was likely introduced in the data by the use of Mturk participants, a more diverse sample population. This possibility finds support in Berinsky, Huber, and Lenz's (2010, p. 1) assertion that "the demographic characteristics of domestic MTurk users are more representative and diverse than the corresponding student and convenience samples typically used." Although noise was likely increased by the use of MTurk, the more geographically and demographically diverse sample used in experiment 3 suggests that the sharing mediation may be generalized beyond the college student population.

Another possible explanation relates to the fact that experiment 3 likely controlled for important explanatory factors linked to material versus experiential purchases. This reasoning finds support in Carter and Gilovich (2012). In their study 4, the authors adopted a similar framing approach and asked Mturk participants to imagine that they had just bought a 3-D television set. Half were instructed to think about its material properties "(e.g., where it would go in their home, how well it would go with their other possessions)", and the other half were asked to think about its experiential properties "(e.g., what it would be like to watch television "in a

whole new way,” how it would fit with other activities)”. In their subsequent assessment of participants’ happiness, the authors found—as I did—a directional but not significant superiority of experiential framing ( $M = 4.58$ ) over material framing ( $M = 4.16$ ) in advancing happiness ( $t(197) = 1.60, p = .11$ ).

Another point about experiment 3 concerns what the experiment is really comparing in terms of material versus experiential purchases. In the present experiment, the focus was on framing the BBQ grill as an object versus an experience. In this sense, it compared the material features of the purchase and the ownership of it (material condition) against the experience of using the owned object (experiential condition). Differently, recall that the manipulations of experiments 1 and 2 focused on the consumption/enjoyment of the object versus the consumption/enjoyment of the experience. This is illustrated for example in the scripts used in experiment 2. Part of the instructions for the material purchase—social condition read: “You used/consumed this object together with other people whom you knew or became acquainted with during the use/enjoyment of the object.” Relatedly, part of the instructions for the experiential purchase—social condition read: “You had that experience together with other people whom you knew or became acquainted with during the use/enjoyment of the experience.”

This is a subtle yet important distinction. It is so because critics of experiment 3 may raise the valid point that, “Merely owning it is not fun, the fun is in using it.” Experiments 1 and 2, however, compared the use/enjoyment of objects versus the use/enjoyment of experiences, and obtained results consistent with those of experiment 3. Therefore, this set of three studies looked at the phenomenon from two slightly different angles and showed that the sharing mediation results hold across both.

A final aspect of experiment 3 concerns the measure of ownership duration. Previous research indicated that, as time passes, experiential purchases are particularly superior to material purchases in advancing happiness. As results of experiment 3 showed, ownership time between participants in the experiential and material conditions did not significantly differ, which suggests that it exerted no influence on the indirect effect of purchase type on happiness through sharing. Moreover, results showed an insignificant interaction effect of purchase type by ownership time, indicating that time of ownership does not qualify the effect of purchase type on happiness.

Next, I explore further the topic of time and its relation to the effect of purchase type on happiness. I do so by reviewing what existing works report on the topic.

### **Long Term versus Short Term**

Van Boven and Gilovich (2003, study 4) tested whether the passage of time increases experiential purchase's superiority over material purchases in generating happiness. They did so by asking participants to imagine facing four choices, each between a material and an experiential purchase. Those in the distant past condition imagined they had confronted the choices one year ago, those in the distant future condition and those in the near future conditions imagined they would confront them one year in the future and in the following day, respectively. Participants were asked to indicate the one purchase from each pair that they would choose/would have chosen, and that would make/have made them happier. Results from planned contrast analyses revealed that experiences were more likely to be chosen by participants in the two temporally distant conditions than by those in the near future condition (no significant



difference was found between the two temporally distant conditions). The authors thus concluded that “experiences have particular appeal when construed from the higher level of abstraction that comes with temporal distance, implying that experiences are more open to favorable interpretations over time (p. 1199).”

Following Van Boven and Gilovich’s (2003) idea, Nicolao et al. (2009) used adaptation theory to explain that we draw more happiness from experiences than from objects (when both turn out positively) because we tend to adapt more quickly to objects than to experiences. In other words, the positive benefits of objects are shorter-lived than those of experiences. The authors adopted the same rationale to explain their finding that, when the purchase turns out negatively, experiences make people more unhappy than do objects. That is, the negative effects of objects are equally shorter-lived than those of experiences.

Together, these works indicate that the passage of time magnifies experiential purchases’ superiority over material purchases in cultivating happiness. This finding is in line with works suggesting that while we tend to easily transfer positive feelings from one object to another and to be in a constant pursuit for not-yet-owned objects, we are inclined to be protective of our memories of experiences. Specifically, McCracken (1988) maintained that when a much desired object is acquired, consumers tend to transfer their attention and positive feelings to newly desired and not-yet-owned ones. The view that objects are readily substitutable directly contrasts with the idea that experiences create valuable memories worthy of protection. Precisely, Zauberman, Ratner, and Kim (2009) found that people protect their memories of special experiences by adopting one of two strategies: They avoid having the same experience again in order to keep its memories intact and away from interference. And when a repeat of the experience is unavoidable, people tend to acquire memory cues (a specific souvenir vs. a random

CD) to help them retrieve the special memories of the first experience. Whereas avoiding repetition appears suitable to protect memories of special experiences, in other types of experiences (e.g., watching movies, reading books) repetition is in fact used to strengthen one's memories. That was found by Russell and Levy (2012, p. 347) who explained that "Oriented toward the past, participants express the need to go back to previous experiences, to reaffirm or consolidate memories."

In summary, these works indicate that we draw benefits from objects for a shorter period as compared to experiences. It is worth noting that this effect is not replicated in the results of experiment 3, reported above. While speculative, it appears that the limited variance in ownership time may account for the insignificant effects in my data (i.e., in the scale designed to measure the number of years participants had owned the BBQ grill, 29% indicated owning it for 1 year, and 89% (cumulative percentage) indicated owning it for 7 years or less).

#### **Experiment 4**

The experiments presented thus far demonstrate that people's higher inclination to tell others about their experiences (vs. objects) explains why they gain more happiness from their life experiences (vs. material objects). Furthermore, higher sharing is associated with greater happiness not only for experiences (experiments 2 and 3) but also for objects (experiments 1, 2, and 3).

This robust result raises the question: If we could increase people's inclination to share about material objects, would their happiness be as high as that people gain from life experiences? A positive answer to this question would have important implications to society. It

would mean that objects may be just as likely as experiences to advance happiness—as long as people share about them. To test this idea, I conducted experiment 4.

In experiment 4, the salience of sharing behaviors was manipulated by cuing participants with either sharing-related words (experimental condition) or neutral words unrelated to sharing (control condition). This manipulation was chosen because, as Berger and Schwartz (2011) showed, environmental cues exert an important influence on which purchases consumers talk about. Precisely, people share more often about purchases that are made salient by environmental cues. Consistent with this idea, I expect that cuing the behavior of sharing will lead to more sharing. This effect, however, is likely to depend on the type of purchase. Precisely, because people are already highly inclined to share about their experiences (as demonstrated by the results of experiments 1, 2, and 3), I expect that the effect of the cuing manipulation will be mild or neutral in the group of experiential purchasers. In this group's mind, it seems that experiences are naturally linked with sharing. On the other hand, I expect that the influence of the cuing manipulation will be particularly strong in the group of material purchasers. This group does not appear to naturally link objects with sharing. Therefore, I expect that when sharing is cued, participants in the material purchase condition will be as inclined to share as those in the experiential purchase condition, thus obtaining similar levels of happiness from their purchases. In short, I predict that the sharing cue (vs. unrelated cue) moderates the relation between purchase type and happiness (H7a), purchase type and sharing (H7b) and the sharing mediation demonstrated in experiments 1-3 (H7c).

**H7a:** The salience of sharing moderates the effect of purchase type on happiness.

**H7b:** The salience of sharing moderates the effect of purchase type on sharing.

**H7c:** The salience of sharing moderates the mediating effect of sharing, such that the sharing mediation is observed among unrelated cued but not sharing cued participants.

In line with the above rationale, I also expect that the sharing cue will affect participants' expectations of how positively sharing about the purchase will be seen by others and how they believe others (i.e., their listeners) will regard them. Because experiential purchasers already have high expectations for positive regard, I expect that the sharing cue will primarily affect material purchasers (who normally have relatively low expectations for positive regard). Therefore, I propose a moderated-mediation in which expected regard explains the effect of purchase type on sharing only among participants cued with unrelated topics (replicating results in experiments 1, and 2). Among participants cued with sharing, however, material and experiential purchasers are likely to report similar, high values for expected regard. That, in turn, will eliminate the mediating role of expected regard in this condition. In sum, I hypothesize that sharing cue (vs. unrelated cue) moderates the effect of purchase type on expected regard (H8a) and the expected regard mediation demonstrated in experiment 1 and 2 (H8b).

**H8a:** The salience of sharing moderates the effect of purchase type on expected regard.

**H8b:** The salience of sharing moderates the mediating effect of expected regard, such that the expected regard mediation is observed among unrelated cued but not sharing cued participants.

## Procedures

The predictions were tested using a 2 (purchase type: material vs. experiential) x 2 (cued topic: sharing vs. unrelated) between-subjects design. Eighty-one participants were recruited from Mturk (females = 49, average age = 35.77, ranging from 18 to 65 years). Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions.

In the first part of the study (the cuing manipulation), participants were asked to write three sentences. For each, they were given two verbs that should be used as part of the sentence. Below, I list the words and report, within parentheses, each word's frequency count based on the SUBTLEX-US database (Brysbaert, New, and Keuleers, 2012). Considering each word's frequency count is important because, compared to low-frequency words, high-frequency ones are read faster and understood better (Crossley, Louwerse, McCarthy, and McNamara, 2007), which therefore may have cognitive processing implications.

In the sharing cued condition, participants were given the verbs 'talk' (Frequency Count—SUBTLWF: 855.00) and 'share' (69.51) (sentence 1), 'communicate' (8.51) and 'tell' (1724.49) (sentence 2), and 'say' (1639.78) and 'disclose' (1.73) (sentence 3). In the unrelated cued condition, they were given the verbs 'grow' (59.49) and 'cut' (229.76) (sentence 1), 'lose' (164.35) and 'find' (830.96) (sentence 2), and 'sleep' (227.94) and 'leave' (560.71) (sentence 3). The mean frequency of the words used for the sharing cued condition ( $M = 716.50$ ) is

statistically equivalent to the mean frequency of the words used for the unrelated cued condition ( $M = 345.54$ ,  $F(1, 11) = 1.10$ ,  $p = .31$ ). Hence, it is unlikely that the tests of the hypotheses were affected by potential cognitive processing influences due to word frequency.

In the next part of the experiment, participants were instructed to think and write about either a material or an experiential purchase they intend to make some time in the future. In this experiment, I focused on a future purchase because the cue manipulation was intended to affect future behavior rather than recalled behavior. In general, instructions were similar to those used in the previous three experiments, except that they elicited a future purchase. The scripts read:

Material Purchase: Now, we would like you to please think and write, in some detail, about an object that you intend to purchase some time in the future. In other words, write about a material purchase that you think about making. Such purchase is something tangible, something you can touch with your hand. When writing, please describe the object itself and what you imagine it will be like to have it.

Experiential Purchase: Now, we would like you to please think and write, in some detail, about an experience that you intend to purchase some time in the future. In other words, write about an experiential purchase that you think about making. Such purchase is something you experience or live through, and that at the end of it all you are left with are your memories of it. When writing, please describe the experience itself and what you imagine it will be like to have it.

**Assessment of Variables of Interest.** The measures of expected regard, sharing, and happiness were the same as those used in the previous experiments, adapted for the future

purchase scenario. The measure of expected regard read: I think the person listening to me would regard me more highly after learning about my object/experience (1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree). To assess happiness, I asked: When you think about that object/experience, how happy does it make you?; How much will that object/experience contribute to your happiness in life? (1 = Not at all; 7 = Very much). The measures of sharing read: I would want to share with others the details of that object/experience; I would feel excited about sharing the details of that object/experience. (1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree).

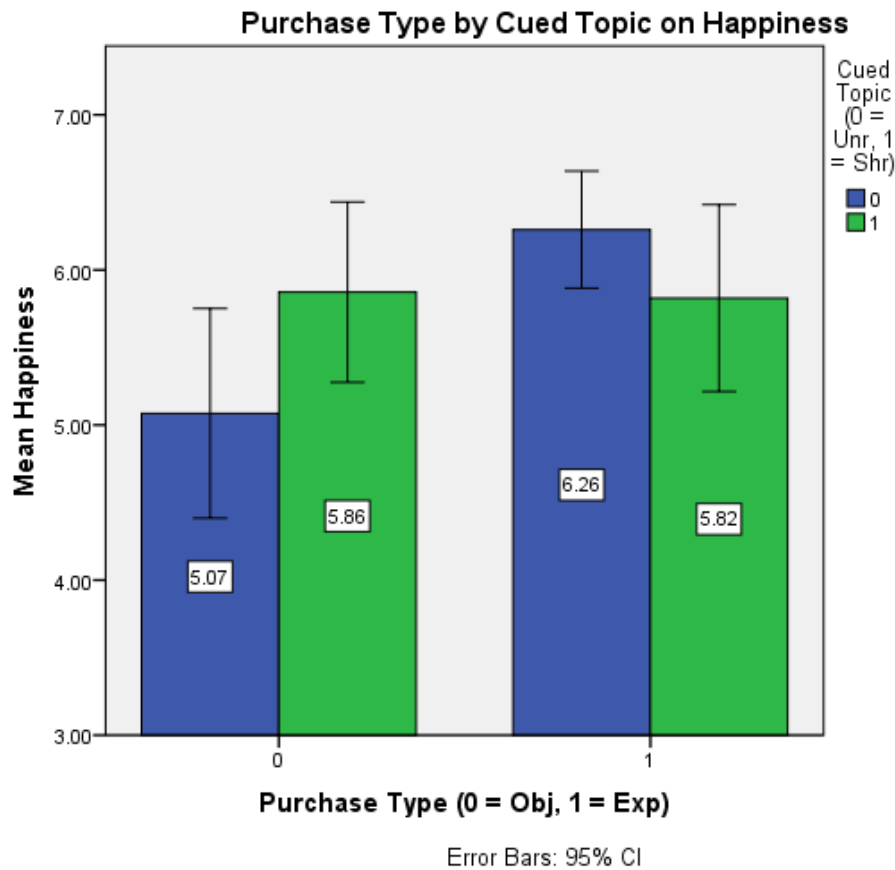
## Results

**Reliability.** Reliability analyses showed high internal consistency for the two items of happiness ( $\alpha = .76$ ) and the two items of sharing ( $\alpha = .95$ ). These items were therefore combined to form overall measures of happiness and sharing, respectively.

**Happiness.** Results from a 2-way ANOVA revealed that the proposed 2-way interaction (H7a) was supported ( $F(1, 80) = 4.99, p = .028$ ). There was also a significant main effect of purchase type ( $M_{experiential} = 6.09, M_{material} = 5.46, F(1, 80) = 4.37, p = .04$ ), however this result was qualified by the interaction. The main effect of cued topic was not significant ( $M_{unrelated} = 5.66, M_{sharing} = 5.83, F(1, 80) = .38, p = .53$ ). Inspection of the interaction supported the prediction that cued topic would affect the happiness of participants in the material purchase condition only. Specifically, participants in the material purchases condition reported marginally higher levels of happiness if they had first been cued with sharing ( $M = 5.86$ ) than if they had been cued with unrelated topics ( $M = 5.07, F(1, 33) = 3.05, p = .09$ ). There was no significant

difference among participants in the experiential purchase condition with regards to cued topic ( $M_{unrelated} = 6.26$ ,  $M_{sharing} = 5.82$ ,  $F(1, 46) = 1.74$ ,  $p = .19$ ) (see Figure 4). These results demonstrate that, as hypothesized (H7a), the effect of cued topic (sharing vs. unrelated) on happiness was present only among participants in the material purchase condition.

Figure 4

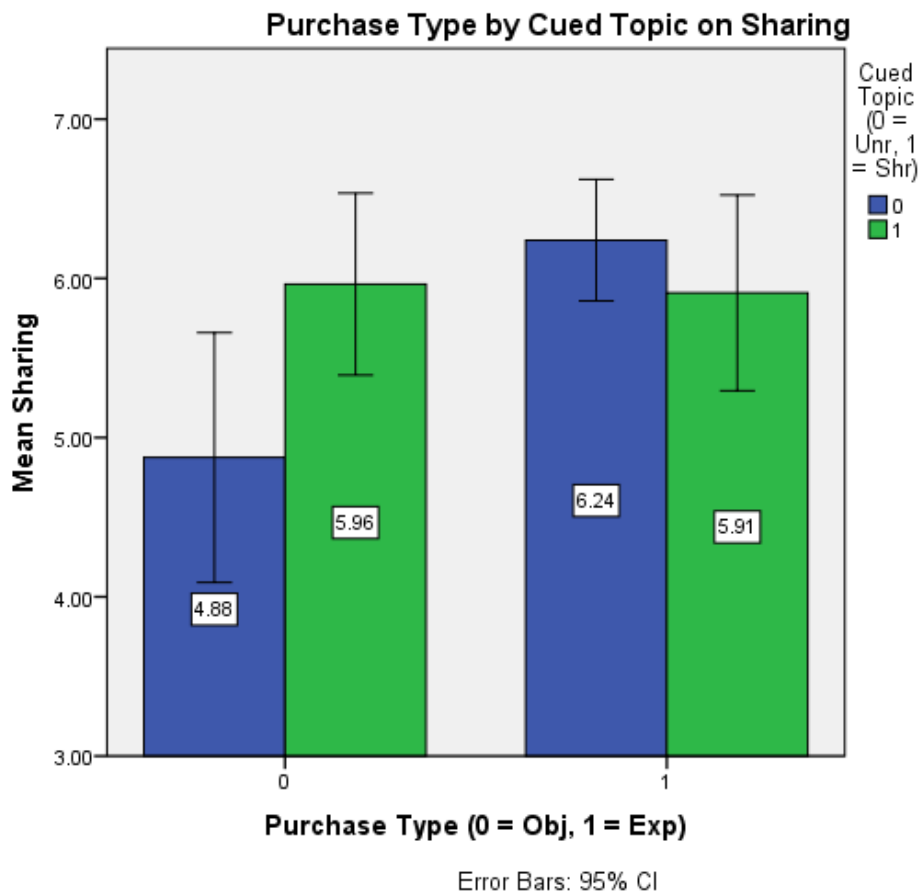


**Sharing.** The results observed for sharing as the dependent variable followed the same pattern as those for happiness as the dependent variable. Specifically, results yielded a main effect of purchase type on sharing ( $M_{experiential} = 6.07$ ,  $M_{material} = 5.42$ ,  $F(1, 80) = 5.02$ ,  $p = .028$ ). They also showed an insignificant main effect of cued topic on sharing ( $M_{unrelated} = 5.55$ ,  $M_{sharing} = 5.93$ ,  $F(1, 80) = 1.68$ ,  $p = .19$ ). Finally, the data revealed a significant interaction effect of purchase type by cued topic ( $F(1, 80) = 5.90$ ,  $p = .017$ ). As proposed in H7b, participants in the



object condition who had been cued with sharing reported higher levels of sharing ( $M = 5.96$ ) than did those who had been cued with unrelated topics ( $M = 4.88$ ,  $F(1, 33) = 4.72$ ,  $p = .03$ ). Again, such difference was not observed between the two cued topics among participants in the experiential purchase condition ( $M_{\text{unrelated}} = 6.24$ ,  $M_{\text{sharing}} = 5.91$ ,  $F(1, 46) = .94$ ,  $p = .33$ ) (see Figure 5). These data indicate that the effect of cued topic is restricted to the sharing of material purchases. People's already-high inclination to share about their experiential purchases is, on the other hand, unaffected by the differential cuing of sharing versus unrelated.

Figure 5



Noticeably, the data show that encouraging people to share about their material purchases leads them to enjoy benefits (i.e., happiness) at levels similar to those enjoyed by people who

share about their experiential purchases. Specifically, in the material purchase condition, the increase in the values of sharing and happiness from the cued unrelated condition ( $M_{sharing} = 4.88$  and  $M_{happiness} = 5.07$ ) to the cued sharing condition ( $M_{sharing} = 5.96$  and  $M_{happiness} = 5.86$ ) brought the latter close to the values observed in the experiential purchase condition ( $M_{sharing} = 5.91$  and  $M_{happiness} = 5.82$ ). None of these contrasts approached statistical significance.

**Moderated-Mediation Analysis.** To recap, I proposed that the sharing mediation (as found in experiments 1-3) will be moderated by cued topic (H7c). Specifically, I hypothesized that the sharing mediation as found in experiments 1-3 will be replicated in the unrelated cued condition. However, I expect this mediation to be reduced or eliminated when sharing is cued because participants in the material purchase condition will report levels of sharing and happiness compatible to those reported by participants in the experiential purchase condition.

To analyze these data, I conducted a moderated-mediation analysis as proposed by Preacher, Rucker, and Hayes (2007). The first regression included purchase type, cued topic, and their interaction as independent variables and happiness as dependent variable. As we saw in the ANOVA analysis reported under ‘Happiness’, the purchase type by cued topic interaction is significant ( $\beta = -1.22$ ,  $t = -2.23$ ,  $p = .028$ ). The second regression analysis included the same independent variables. As dependent variable, it included the proposed mediator ‘sharing’. As we saw in the ANOVA analysis under ‘Sharing’, the interaction effect of purchase type by cued topic is significant ( $\beta = -1.42$ ,  $t = -2.43$ ,  $p = .017$ ). The third regression analysis showed that the proposed mediator (sharing) had a significant effect on happiness ( $\beta = .53$ ,  $t = 6.38$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Finally, when I included the mediator in the model, I found that the purchase type by cued topic interaction became insignificant ( $\beta = -.53$ ,  $t = -1.08$ ,  $p = .28$ ), whereas the effect of the mediator

remained significant ( $\beta = .48, t = 5.30, p < .001$ ). This finding was supported by the result of the bootstrap analysis of mediation ( $CI(95\%) = .22, .71$ ). Each aspect of these results supports the hypothesized moderated-mediation effect (H7c).

Next, I further explored the moderation by analyzing the effect of the cued topic within each purchase type condition. First, I examined cued topic's impact on happiness through sharing in the material purchases condition. Next, I conducted a similar mediation test, but now in the experiential purchases condition. For material purchases, I expected that cued topic would affect happiness through sharing because participants cued with sharing are likely to be more inclined to share. On the other hand, I did not expect this result for experiential purchases because, as we saw in previous studies, even in the absence of motivation to share participants in that condition already display a high inclination to do so.

As expected, the sharing mediation was significant in the material purchase condition, but not in the experiential purchase condition. Specifically, for participants in the material purchase condition, cued topic had a marginally significant effect on happiness ( $\beta = .78, t = 1.74, p = .09$ ), and a significant effect on sharing ( $\beta = 1.08, t = 2.17, p = .037$ ). Similarly, sharing significantly influenced happiness ( $\beta = .40, t = 2.97, p = .006$ ). When both cued topic and sharing were included in the model, the previously marginally significant effect of cued topic became insignificant ( $\beta = .38, t = .87, p = .38$ ) whereas the effect of sharing remained significant ( $\beta = .36, t = 2.45, p = .02$ ). Results from the bootstrap analysis of mediation supported the mediating role of sharing in the material purchase condition ( $\beta = .37, CI(95\%) = .06, .94$ ), as predicted.

In contrast, for participants in the experiential purchase condition (those who are naturally inclined to share), the mediating effect of sharing was not present. Precisely, cued topic's effect on happiness was insignificant ( $\beta = -.44, t = -1.33, p = .19$ ), as was its effect on

sharing ( $\beta = -.33, t = -.97, p = .33$ ). Sharing's effect on happiness was however significant ( $\beta = .64, t = 5.67, p < .001$ ). When both cued topic and sharing were included in the model, the effect of cued topic on happiness remained insignificant ( $\beta = -.23, t = -.89, p = .37$ ). The bootstrap results also indicate that the sharing mediation is not significant ( $\beta = -.21, CI(95\%) = -.83, .13$ ).

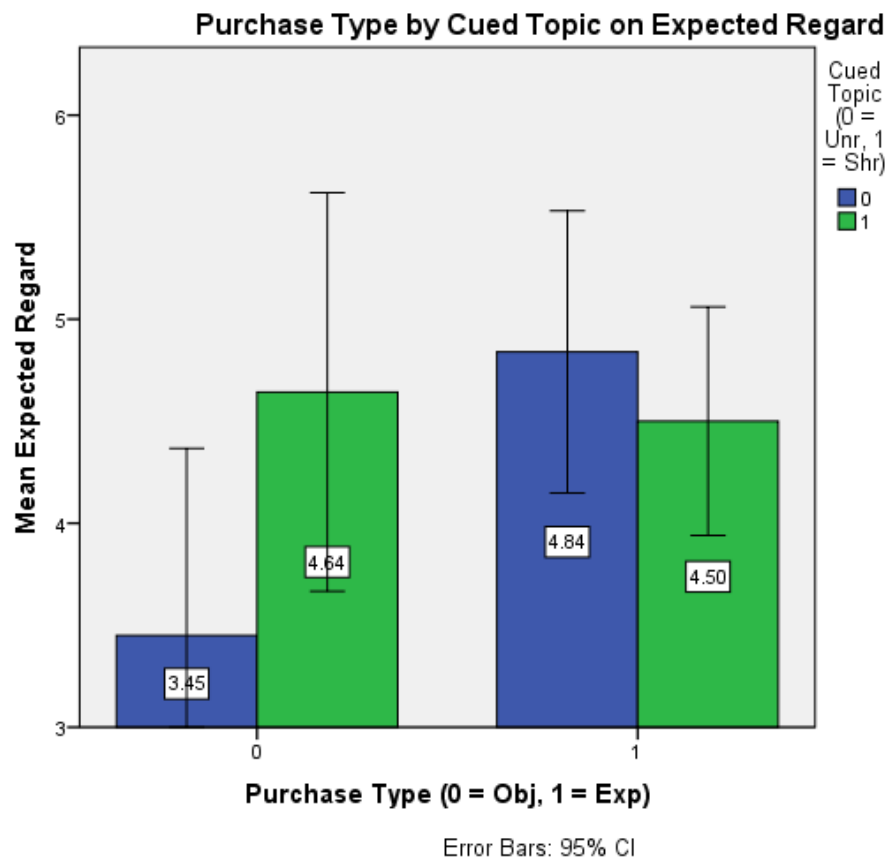
Altogether, these results establish that making sharing salient has a positive effect if the topic of sharing is a material purchase. That, in turn, positively influences happiness. On the other hand, if the topic of sharing is an experiential purchase, additional salience of sharing is uninfluential, perhaps because people are naturally highly inclined to share about their experiences.

The next set of analyses tests H8a and H8b. The first proposes that cued topic moderates the effect of purchase type on expected regard. The second proposes that expected regard mediates the effect of purchase type on sharing, an effect that is moderated by the cued topic.

**Expected Regard.** First, I report the results of an ANOVA analysis for the two manipulated IVs on expected regard. Specifically, results yielded a marginally significant main effect of purchase type on expected regard ( $M_{material} = 4.04, M_{experiential} = 4.67, F(1, 80) = 2.74, p = .102$ ), and an insignificant main effect of cued topic on expected regard ( $M_{unrelated} = 4.14, M_{sharing} = 4.57, F(1, 80) = 1.28, p = .26$ ). Importantly, the interaction effect of purchase type by cued topic was significant ( $F(1, 80) = 4.14, p = .045$ ). As expected, participants in the object condition who had been cued with sharing expected, at a marginally significant level, to be more positively regarded ( $M = 4.64$ ) than did participants who had been cued with unrelated topics ( $M = 3.45, F(1, 33) = 3.4, p = .074$ ). This difference was not observed between the two cued topics among participants in the experiential purchase condition ( $M_{unrelated} = 4.84, M_{sharing} = 4.50, F(1,$

46) = .60,  $p = .44$ ) (see Figure 6). In line with my proposition (H8a), these data indicate that regard expectations by participants in the material purchase condition are affected by cueing the topic of sharing. On the other hand, people's already-high expectations for being positively regarded as a result of sharing about experiential purchases are not affected by the differential cuing of sharing versus unrelated.

Figure 6



**Moderated-Mediation Analysis.** To recap, I proposed that the expected regard mediation (as found in experiments 1 and 2) would be moderated by cued topic (H8b). Specifically, I hypothesized that the expected regard mediation as found in experiments 1 and 2 would be replicated in the unrelated cued condition. As proposed in H8b, I expected this

mediation to be reduced or eliminated when sharing was cued because participants in the material purchase condition would likely report levels of expected regard and sharing compatible to those reported by participants in the experiential purchase condition.

The first regression included purchase type, cued topic, and their interaction as independent variables and sharing as dependent variable. As shown in the above ANOVA analysis, the purchase type by cued topic interaction was significant ( $\beta = -1.42, t = -2.43, p = .017$ ). The second regression analysis included the same independent variables. As dependent variable, it included the proposed mediator ‘expected regard’. As reported in the ANOVA analysis under ‘Expected Regard’, the interaction of purchase type by cued topic was significant ( $\beta = -1.53, t = -2.03, p = .045$ ). The third regression revealed that expected regard had a significant effect on sharing ( $\beta = .35, t = 4.39, p < .001$ ). Finally, when I included the mediator in the model, I found that the previously significant interaction effect of purchase type by cued topic became marginally significant ( $\beta = -.98, t = -1.75, p = .084$ ), whereas the effect of the mediator remained significant ( $\beta = .28, t = 3.42, p = .001$ ). Bootstrap analysis of mediation supported the mediating role of expected regard ( $CI(95\%) = .11, .46$ ). These results show evidence supporting the hypothesized moderated-mediation effect (H8b).

Next, I conducted further analyses to explore the effect of cued topic within each purchase type condition. First, I examined cued topic’s influence on sharing through expected regard in the material purchases condition. Next, I performed a similar mediation test, but now in the experiential purchases condition. For material purchases, I expected that cued topic would affect sharing through expected regard. On the other hand, I did not expect this result for experiential purchase because, as experiments 1 and 2 showed, even in the absence of sharing’s

salience participants in that condition already expected to be seen positively as a result of telling others about their experiences.

As expected the regard mediation was significant for participants in the material purchase condition, but not for those in the experiential purchase condition. Specifically, for participants in the material purchase condition, cued topic significantly influenced sharing ( $\beta = 1.08, t = 2.17, p = .037$ ), and marginally significantly influenced expected regard ( $\beta = 1.19, t = 1.84, p = .074$ ). Similarly, expected regard significantly affected sharing ( $\beta = .49, t = 4.51, p < .001$ ). When both cued topic and expected regard were included in the model, the previously significant effect of cued topic became insignificant ( $\beta = .55, t = 1.26, p = .214$ ) whereas the effect of expected regard remained significant ( $\beta = .44, t = 3.95, p < .001$ ). The bootstrap test of mediation supported the mediating effect of expected regard ( $\beta = .52, CI(95\%) = .04, .1.31$ ).

In contrast, for participants in the experiential purchase condition (those who are naturally inclined to expect high regard), the mediating effect of expected regard was not present. Precisely, cued topic's effect on sharing was insignificant ( $\beta = -.33, t = -.97, p = .336$ ), as was its effect on expected regard ( $\beta = -.34, t = -.77, p = .441$ ). Expected regard's effect on sharing was similarly insignificant ( $\beta = .10, t = .89, p < .37$ ). When both cued topic and expected regard were included in the model, the effect of cued topic on sharing remained insignificant ( $\beta = -.29, t = -.86, p = .393$ ). The result of the bootstrap analysis did not support a mediating effect of expected regard on sharing in the experiential purchase condition ( $\beta = -.03, CI(95\%) = -.25, .04$ ), as expected.

These results show that cuing people with the idea of sharing has a positive effect on material purchasers' expectations for regard. That, in turn, positively affects their inclination to tell others about their material purchases. On the other hand, experiential purchasers, who

normally expect to gain high regard as a result of sharing about their experiences, are not affected by the cuing of sharing.

## **Discussion**

Experiment 4 shows that increasing sharing's salience has a positive effect on the happiness of people who engage in conversations about material purchases. Precisely, the sharing of objects, which otherwise would happen to a lesser degree than that of experiences, increases and positively affects happiness when people are cued with sharing behaviors. Results suggest that motivating consumers to share about their material purchases may be beneficial to them. On the other hand, the sharing of experiences, which normally happens at higher degrees as compared to the sharing of objects, does not have much to gain from increasing the salience of sharing. Perhaps other means of motivating them to share would have a different effect, however. Of note, the present experiment focused on purchases participants intend to make in the future. In line with this, the happiness participants reported is likely to more closely reflect the happiness they expect to gain than the happiness they have already experienced.

Additionally, findings show that the sharing cue positively influences material purchasers' expectations for regard, which in turn explains their increased inclination to share.

In sum, cuing material purchasers to share leads them to expect higher regard, which results in higher sharing. That, in turn, translates into increased happiness (to levels similar to those enjoyed by experiential purchasers). These findings are consistent with a mental model that naturally associates experiences with sharing and higher regard from others. The relative lower



sharing of material purchases may be overcome by simply increasing the salience of sharing behaviors.

Despite the convergent results of experiments 1-4, two major concerns remain that will be addressed in the next two experiments. First, whereas experiment 3's data cast doubt on the possibility of reverse causality in the sharing mediation, the concern cannot be completely dismissed. Second, sharing has been assessed through self-reported measures. Participants have not yet engaged in the actual behavior of sharing. The remaining experiments address these questions in different ways. In examining the first issue, experiment 5 holds happiness constant to minimize the likelihood that happiness mediates the effect of purchase type on sharing. Experiment 6, in turn, addresses both issues by manipulating the sharing behavior so that it cannot be an outcome of happiness and so that participants enact the behavior.

## **CHAPTER 7: EXPERIMENTS 5 AND 6**

### **Experiment 5**

As recognized previously, ambiguity about the causal direction in the sharing mediation offers grounds for criticism of my interpretation of results in experiments 1-4. As mentioned in the discussion for experiment 3, the potential counter-argument is that experiences make people happier than do objects even before any sharing takes place; and that, as a result, explains why people share about experiences more. To investigate further the plausibility of this argument, in experiment 5 I held constant the amount of happiness that the two types of purchases advanced and asked participants which of the two they 1) have shared more, and 2) would prefer to share if they had the opportunity to share about only one of the two. Naturally, the consumer herself is the best judge of how much happiness she drew from each purchase, therefore I employed a within-subjects design in order to let each participant pick a material and an experiential purchase that she perceived made her equally happy.

### **Procedures**

Forty participants from Mturk completed the experiment. I employed a within-subjects design in which participants were first instructed to recall and write about a material and an experiential purchase that had made them equally happy. The script of the instructions read: ‘First, please think of two purchases that made you equally happy and cost about \$100 each. One should be a material purchase (something tangible that you gained ownership over).

The other should be an experiential purchase (something that you experienced and at the end had nothing tangible except for your memories of it).”

The order in which participants wrote about the two purchases was randomized. After writing about each purchase, a manipulation check for happiness was used. Participants answered on a 7-point scale: How happy did it make you? (1 = Not at All Happy; 7 = Very Happy).

Next, I assessed sharing in two ways. In the first assessment, participants answered two questions to indicate the number of people to whom they had told about the object and the experience. The order in which these two questions appeared was also randomized. The questions were worded as:

“Before participating in this study, to how many people have you told about your object? (please enter the number of people in the space below. For example, if you have shared about your object with ten people, please enter the number 10)  
Before participating in this study, to how many people have you told about your experience? (please enter the number of people in the space below. For example, if you have shared about your object with ten people, please enter the number 10)”

In the second assessment, participants were asked which of the two purchases they would prefer to share if they had the opportunity to share about only one of the two. The question read: “Let's suppose you had the opportunity to tell a person about one (and only one) of the two purchases you wrote about, which one would you prefer to share about?”

## Results

The manipulation check for equivalent levels of happiness was successful. Precisely, a *t*-test comparing happiness from the material and the experiential purchase produced a statistically insignificant result. As expected, participants indicated that they drew similar levels of happiness from the material ( $M = 8.10$ ) and the experiential purchase ( $M = 7.85$ ;  $t(39) = .70$ ,  $p = .48$ ).

The assessment of the number of people that participants had previously shared supported my prediction. Participants reported having shared with a significantly higher number of people about their experiential purchases ( $M = 15.38$ ) than about their material purchases ( $M = 8.10$ ,  $t(39) = 2.39$ ,  $p = .021$ ).

Also consistent with my expectation, if they were given the opportunity to share about only one of the two purchases, a significantly higher number of participants indicated that they would prefer to share about the experiential purchase (27 participants, 67%) than about the material purchase (13 participants, 33%,  $t(39) = 2.33$ ,  $p = .025$ ).

## Discussion

Material and experiential purchases that advance equal levels of happiness do not have the same appeal when it comes to interpersonal communication. Results from experiment 5 indicate that even when the two types of purchases are equally able to advance happiness, people still share about their experiences (vs. objects) with a larger number of individuals. This preference to talk about experiences is also evidenced in people's indication that, if only one

purchase could be shared, a considerable majority (i.e., two thirds) would prefer to tell others about their experiential purchases.

This set of evidence provides support for the causal direction that I propose in my framework, that sharing accounts for why people draw more happiness from their experiential (vs. material) purchases (and not the other way around). Specifically, it suggests that people are more inclined to share about their experiential (vs. material) purchases even when both purchases advance the same level of happiness. This, therefore, constitutes additional evidence against the potential reverse causality in the sharing mediation.

### **Experiment 6**

Experiment 5 allowed for a deeper examination of the direction of causality in the sharing mediation. Experiment 6 was designed to investigate that a step further and also to engage participants in the actual behavior of sharing. In terms of the latter (i.e., regarding the actual behavior of sharing), I used a procedure in which participants first recalled and wrote about a material or an experiential purchase and then shared about that purchase (or an unrelated topic) with another participant chosen at random. Since the behavior of sharing was manipulated experimentally, the causal flow between sharing and happiness can proceed in one only direction (addressing the potential issue related to the direction of causality).

The purpose of experiment 6 is to examine how a specific amount of sharing about a purchase affects the happiness people gain from the purchase, compared with sharing for the same amount of time about an unrelated topic. Based on the literature reviewed earlier, I expect that sharing about a purchase will increase the happiness people gain from that purchase. If the

amount of sharing is held constant, the increase in happiness should be equivalent for experiential purchases and material purchases. This expectation emerges from experiment 4's findings that similar high levels of happiness result from similar high sharing of both material and experiential purchases. In other words, sharing increases the happiness of both material and experiential tellers.

It is important to note that, as shown in the five previous experiments, in their normal lives people tend to share about their experiences more than about their material objects. Thus, we should expect that study participants will come into the lab with a history of sharing in which experiential (vs. material) conversations predominated. Consequently, happiness levels of experiential (vs. material) participants are likely to be higher before sharing. If both material and experiential participants share at equal amounts, happiness levels should be boosted by about the same amount. Critically, I do not expect such a boost for participants who share about an unrelated purchase.

A major motivation for this experiment was to engage people in the actual behavior of conversing about a purchase (vs. unrelated topic). This is important since the focal mediator of my model (i.e., sharing) is of a behavioral nature and the previous experiments examined sharing only through self-reported measures.

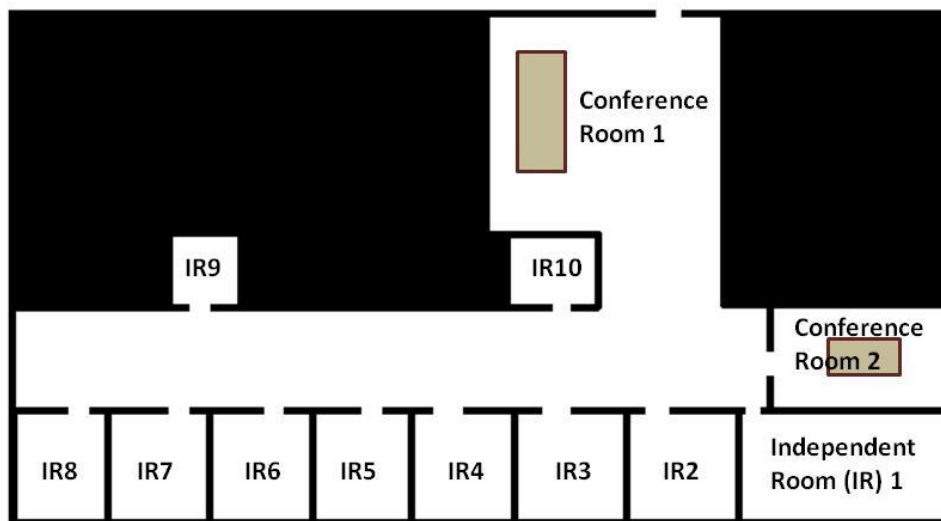
Naturally, many potential benefits of sharing could be compromised by artificially pairing up participants who were previously unknown to each other and by getting them to converse in the unnatural setting of an experiment lab. One of those potential benefits relates to stronger social bonds that commonly result from sharing (Collins and Miller, 1994; Gable, Gonzaga, and Strachman, 2006). In the present experiment, obtaining such benefits was less likely given that participants were not likely to be well acquainted and would probably disperse

after completing the activity. Thus, I believe this experiment represents a conservative test of the benefits of sharing. In a natural environment, sharing may provide more benefits than can be observed in the lab. Despite these likely constraints, the ability to control for other extraneous factors and to adopt a strict procedure to test my model were judged to outweigh the limitations.

## Methods

I used a 2 (purchase type: material vs. experiential) x 2 (share about: the purchase vs. an unrelated topic) between-subjects design. Ninety-seven undergraduate students participated in the experiment in exchange for class credit. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. The laboratory used contains two conference rooms and 10 individual, smaller rooms (Figure 7). A maximum of 10 participants (five pairs formed by one teller and one listener each) were involved in each experimental session.

Figure 7



An important aspect of this experiment pertains to its control condition. Whereas participants in the experimental condition were instructed to share about a purchase, those in the control condition were asked to share about an unrelated topic—i.e., clothes washing. I choose this topic as the control condition because: 1) it seems equally dissimilar to the two experimental conditions as it involves objects and experiences, 2) it is a frequently performed activity, so it is likely stored in memory as a script rather than as details about specific episodes, 3) based on the first two issues, I expected that a conversation about this topic would be unlikely to deviate to other topics related to material or experiential purchases, 4) at the same time, this topic is similar to the experimental condition in that it involves some self-disclosure, which is intrinsically rewarding (Tamir and Mitchell, 2012), and 5) it is a topic that both parties in the conversation can probably relate to personally.

The employment of this control condition enabled the examination of whether sharing about the purchase is indeed a determinant factor in the purchase's ability to advance happiness. In line with this, if increased happiness from the purchase is observed only when participants share about it (vs. share about washing clothes), results would provide strong evidence that sharing about purchases is responsible for the greater happiness generated by experiential (vs. material) purchases—which results from people's higher inclination to share about experiential purchases, as demonstrated previously—, and that 2) the direction of causality proposed in the model is supported.



## Measures

The assessments of happiness and expected regard were made with the same items used in the previous experiments. Importantly, happiness was measured in the pre- and post-sharing questionnaires. In addition to happiness, I also assessed participants' positive affect. To do so I employed 11 positive affect items from PANAS (i.e., happy, joyful, confident, delighted, excited, bold, enthusiastic, lively, proud, cheerful, and daring).

## Procedures

Upon arrival at the lab, participants were signed up and given the appropriate IRB-disclosure information. Next, they were given the pre-sharing questionnaire and an ID code written on a Post-it paper. They were also told to carry the ID code at all times as it would serve various purposes throughout the study. Half of the participants received the teller's questionnaire and the other half the listener's. All concurrently worked on the questionnaire, in conference room 1.

It is worth noting that whereas the roles of tellers and listeners were at this moment being established, participants were not made aware of that. Moreover, although the ID code participants received at the beginning of the study established the pairs of tellers and listeners, participants were unaware of that as well. Keeping this information unknown to participants intended to avoid potential influences that it could have on the purchase the teller recalled and wrote about on the pre-sharing questionnaire.

The teller's questionnaire asked them 1) for their ID code, 2) to recall and write about a material or an experiential purchase, and 3) to respond to the pre-sharing measures of happiness and positive affect. To reduce the chances that they would connect these measures to the experimental task and remember them for the post-sharing measures, the tellers next completed five items about their social media use. The listener's questionnaire asked them the same sets of questions on positive affect and social media use (they did not recall and write about a purchase nor answered happiness measures).

After all participants concluded this part of the experiment, the experimenter collected the pre-sharing questionnaires. Participants were then asked to look at their ID code, which informed them whether they should remain in conference room 1 (tellers) or stand up and go to conference room 2 (listeners).

In conference room 1, the experimenter asked participants (tellers) to write down on the Post-it paper the purchase they had just written on the pre-sharing questionnaire. This ensured that, if they found necessary, tellers could retrieve the purchase at any point during the study (e.g., during the sharing activity, during the post-sharing questionnaire). Next, the experimenter handed the tellers a paper containing the instructions for the upcoming sharing activity and for their role as tellers. In general, tellers were informed that they would share about a topic that was written on a piece of paper they would later find in the individual room. The instructions also asked them to tell about that topic to the other participant as if they were talking with a friend.

Whereas tellers familiarized themselves with those instructions in conference room 1, listeners (in conference room 2) were verbally instructed on the upcoming sharing activity and their role as listeners. In general, listeners were informed that the teller was going to tell them

about a topic and that they should react as they would in a normal conversation in which they listened to a friend.

Following this instructional phase, listeners and tellers rejoined in conference room 1. They were asked to use their ID codes to find their partner and introduce themselves to each other. This two-minute activity was designed to 'break the ice' and acclimate participants with the idea of conversing. While participants familiarized themselves with their partners, the experimenter went through five of the ten individual rooms and turned on sound-recording devices. These devices recorded the sharing activity that took place in those five individual rooms.

Next, the experimenter returned to conference room 1 and announced the end of the ice breaking activity. The five pairs were then asked to use their ID code to identify their assigned individual room (individual rooms 1 through 5 were used for this next part of the study). Each pair was asked to stand by the door of their respective room. At this point, the experimenter verbally reinforced the teller and listener's roles. Then, he asked that the teller of each pair go into the individual room, find the paper where the topic to be shared was written, read it, and come outside the room again once they were done (the topic was either the purchase they had written in the first part of the study or the process of getting their clothes washed). At this point, listeners remained standing by the door of their respective rooms.

Upon tellers' return, the experimenter informed them that the next activity was a timed one and that, to indicate its end, he would give them a sound signal. At that signal, they should stop the sharing activity, come outside of the room, and stand by the door again. Next, participants were asked to go into the rooms, close the door, and start sharing.

After 2:30 minutes had passed, the experimenter gave participants the sound signal. With tellers and listeners standing by the door of their individual rooms, the experimenter instructed the tellers to remain where they were and the five listeners to move to the five additional, adjacent individual rooms. Following, the experimenter told tellers and listeners to turn on the computer screen in their respective individual rooms and work on the after-sharing online questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed to assess factors of interest (e.g., post-sharing happiness, expected regard). The ending page of the online questionnaire instructed participants to leave the individual room and walk back to conference room 1, where they were debriefed, thanked, and released.

## Results

**Reliability and Factor Analyses.** The reliability analysis on the happiness items showed a coefficient alpha of .62 for pre-sharing happiness and .72 for post-sharing happiness. These items were averaged to create overall measures of pre-sharing happiness and post-sharing happiness.

The two items designed to assess expected regard provided coefficient alpha of .77. They were also averaged into an overall measure of expected regard.

The reliability test for pre-sharing positive affect yielded an alpha coefficient of .92. Subsequent factor analysis, however, showed that the items loaded on two factors with Eigenvalues of 6.18 and 1.43. Results suggested seven items that appear to more closely capture the construct of interest (positive affect). They are ‘happy’, ‘joyful’, ‘delighted’, ‘excited’, ‘enthusiastic’, ‘lively’, and ‘cheerful’ (these items loaded highly on the first item). Reliability

coefficient for these seven items was .92. These items were averaged to create an overall measure of pre-sharing positive affect.

The next section presents results in which the manipulated concepts of purchase type and shared topic are treated as independent variables, and happiness and expected regard are treated as dependent variables.

**Happiness.** Results supported the expected effect of shared topic on happiness. Specifically, I ran a 2-way ANOVA with purchase type and shared topic as independent variables, and post-sharing happiness as dependent variable. To control for level of happiness and positive affect prior to sharing I introduced pre-sharing happiness and pre-sharing positive affect in the analysis as covariates. As predicted, participants who shared about the purchase reported significantly higher happiness ( $M_{purchase} = 6.78$ ) than did participants who shared about the unrelated topic ( $M_{unrelated} = 6.40$ ,  $F(1, 93) = 4.00$ ,  $p = .048$ ). Insignificant results were observed for the main effect of purchase type ( $M_{material} = 6.55$ ,  $M_{experiential} = 6.63$ ,  $F(1, 93) = .16$ ,  $p = .68$ ) and for the interaction of purchase type by shared topic ( $F(1, 93) = .16$ ,  $p = .68$ ). In line with my expectation, these findings indicate that sharing about the purchase (vs. unrelated topic) had a positive effect on participants' happiness.

**Expected Regard.** Although no specific predictions were made for expected regard, I conducted 2-way ANOVA with purchase type and shared topic as independent variables and expected regard as dependent variable. Results showed an insignificant main effects of purchase type ( $M_{material} = 4.29$ ,  $M_{experiential} = 4.49$ ,  $F(1, 95) = 1.59$ ,  $p = .21$ ) and shared topic ( $M_{purchase} = 4.47$ ,  $M_{unrelated} = 4.31$ ,  $F(1, 95) = 1.02$ ,  $p = .31$ ) on expected regard. Similarly, the interaction of

purchase type by shared topic had an insignificant effect on expected regard ( $F(1, 95) = .41, p = .52$ ).

## Discussion

In experiment 6 participants engaged in the actual behavior of telling others about their purchases (or about an unrelated topic). Results reveal that, consistent with this dissertation's proposed model, sharing is a critical component in purchases' ability to advance happiness. In other words, the happiness people gain from their purchases originates, at least in part, from the conversations they have about those purchases. This notion is further strengthened by the fact that participants who recalled and wrote about the purchase but shared about an unrelated topic did not experience the same increase in happiness.

Inconsistent with my model's assumptions about expected regard, experiential participants did not expect to be more highly regarded than did material participants. Although at first sight this result may appear surprising, a deeper consideration of this experiment's methodology offers a plausible explanation. Whereas in the previous studies participants reported on sharing behavior that they themselves had decided to engage in, participants in the present experiment were instructed to perform the behavior. Moreover, tellers and listeners were fully aware of each other's roles. Hence, when we take into account the listener's awareness that the teller was simply following experimental instructions, it is rather unsurprising that the teller's expectations for regard were unaffected by the type of purchase shared.

Overall, the results linked to happiness provide important evidence supporting this dissertation's model. They do so by demonstrating that interpersonal conversations about

purchases are a critical component of those purchases' potential to generate happiness. Of relevance, these findings were found among people who, in their daily lives, had likely already shared about their purchases. This is important because, a single sharing occasion involving an unfamiliar listener in an artificial setting was powerful enough to positively impact those people's happiness beyond the influence of the numerous previous sharing instances they had.

Beyond the findings of the previous experiments, the results of experiment 6 rule out potential arguments concerning ambiguity in the direction of the causal effect in the sharing mediation. Precisely, the present findings conclusively establish that talking about a purchase is an important and powerful behavior in gaining happiness from the purchase. As the five previous experiments show, people tend to share about their experiential (vs. material) purchases more. Experiment 6 thus confirms that such behavior explains why they draw more happiness from their experiential (vs. material) purchases.

Finally, experiment 6 enriches this work by examining the actual behavior of sharing, as it takes place. Despite the potential limitations the methodology may have imposed, benefits of sharing about the purchase (i.e., increased happiness) materialized in a manner congruent with the proposed model.

## **CHAPTER 8: GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

This dissertation presents evidence that, compared to material purchases (e.g., a new watch), experiential purchases (e.g., a movie at the theater) have a particular appeal for sharing. That, in turn, helps us understand why people draw more happiness from experiences than from objects (a finding first reported by Van Boven and Gilovich, 2003). Findings also indicate that people's concern with being positively regarded explains why they share about life experiences more than about material objects. Finally, results show that, if sharing is made salient, purchasers of material objects are likely to engage in the behavior at levels comparable to those of experiential purchasers. As a consequence, material purchasers gain levels of happiness equivalent to those gained by experiential purchasers (experiment 4).

### **Summary of Dissertation Findings**

#### **Mediating Role of Sharing**

To test the proposed model, I conducted six experiments employing three different procedures. Throughout the experiments, I obtained evidence supporting the mediating role of sharing in the relation between purchase type (material vs. experiential) and happiness.

In experiment 1, I asked participants to recall and write about a previous material or experiential purchase they had made. Through this recall procedure, I found that people's higher inclination to share about their experiential purchases explains why those purchases advance more happiness than do material purchases.



In experiment 2, I used another, stricter recall procedure and obtained a similar pattern of results. Importantly, in this experiment I manipulated the sociality level of the purchase and found consistent results for both solo—experiential versus solo—material purchases, and for social—experiential versus social—material purchases. That is, sharing explains why experiences that are enjoyed solo and socially, respectively, make people happier than do objects that are enjoyed solo and socially.

To gain experimental control over the purchase, in experiment 3, I adopted a framing procedure and found that, when the same purchase (i.e., BBQ grill) is framed in experiential (vs. material) terms, it leads to more sharing. That, in turn, generates higher levels of happiness in those who frame the purchase experientially.

In experiment 4, I investigated the consequence of cuing people with the idea of sharing. By employing a cuing manipulation (cue of sharing vs. cue of unrelated), I found that the salience of sharing influenced the behavior of sharing and, in turn, happiness. Importantly, that result was observed only among participants in the material purchase condition. Those in the experiential purchase condition, who are naturally highly inclined to share, reported high levels for sharing and happiness irrespective of which cuing condition they were in. This result illustrates that people may gain similar, high levels of happiness from both experiences and objects, as long as they engage in high levels of sharing. It also reinforces the power of sharing in advancing happiness.

Next, in experiment 5, I examined further the possible inverse causal effect in the sharing mediation (i.e., that experiential purchases make people happier and, as a result, people share more about them (vs. material purchases)). Here, I kept the happiness gained from both material and experiential purchases constant and assessed sharing in two ways. First, participants

indicated the number of people they had told about each purchase before participating in the study. Second, they indicated which of the two they would prefer to share about if they could tell others about only one of the two purchases. Results from the two assessments established that even when material and experiential purchases advance equal levels of happiness, experiential purchases have a greater appeal as a topic of conversation.

Finally, in experiment 6, I manipulated both purchase type (material vs. experiential) and shared topic (purchase vs. unrelated). Results indicated that only participants who shared about the purchase (vs. unrelated topic) gained additional happiness. This result conclusively establishes the function of sharing in explaining the higher happiness people obtain from their experiential (vs. material) purchases—a result of their greater inclination to share about their life experiences (vs. material objects), as demonstrated in studies 1-5. Another important aspect of experiment 6 is that it allowed for the investigation of the actual behavior of sharing (vs. self-reported sharing, in the previous experiments).

To summarize, the convergent results found in this set of different experimental procedures enable me to argue with confidence that sharing underlies the superiority of experiential over material purchases in advancing happiness.

### **Mediating Role of Expected Regard**

Besides investigating the mediating role of sharing, I took this investigation a step further to explain why people are more inclined to share about experiential than about material purchases. I argued and found evidence that the appeal of experiential purchases for sharing is due to individuals' concern for shedding a positive light upon themselves. That is, people expect

to be more positively regarded as a result of sharing about their experiences (vs. their objects). In addition to demonstrating this effect, I entertained three potential rival explanations concerning reasons why people share about experiences more than about objects. Results refuted the potential alternative arguments that people share more about experiential (vs. material) purchases because 1) experiential purchases are inherently more social (experiments 1 and 2), 2) tellers expect listeners to enjoy hearing about experiential purchases more (experiment 2), and 3) experiential purchases advance more happiness even before the individual shares (experiments 3, 5, and 6).

In the next section I elaborate on the topic of memory, which is highly relevant to this dissertation since sharing involves retrieval of information from memory. Then, I discuss its limitations and opportunities for future research. Then, I bring back the important topic of sharing and offer a final discussion on it. Next, I present the theoretical contributions that this work makes to the happiness and sharing literatures. Following, I explain this dissertation's implications to consumers, marketers, and marketing as a discipline. Finally, I close this work with a conclusion section.

### **Memory and the Recalling of Purchases**

The experiments presented here ask participants to recall a purchase; therefore it is important to entertain topics related to memory and to evaluate how they associate with the domain of this dissertation. Extant memory research has investigated how individuals' reconstructions of themselves, their possessions, and their experiences are influenced by a wide variety of factors. A number of these factors have been captured by the Von Restorff Effect, the

Recency Effect, and the Choice-Supportive Bias. I will discuss next how these factors relate to this dissertation.

### **Memory-Related Factors**

**Von Restorff Effect.** In 1933, Hedwig Von Restorff found that we tend to have stronger memories of an item that is distinctive from (vs. similar to) the other items in its set. In lay words, we are likely to pay more attention to and have stronger memories of things that ‘stand out from the crowd’. In relation to this dissertation, it seems possible that, compared to an object, an experience is more likely to stand out in the set of all experiences the consumer purchases in her lifetime. This is not to say that material objects lack particularities, distinctiveness, or the like. Instead, this idea simply holds that given the flexibility and unpredictability of experiences versus the common standardization of objects, it is possible that each experience (vs. object) is more distinct from the rest. This idea finds empirical support in research showing that people perceive experiences as more unique than objects (Rosenzweig and Gilovich, 2012). Due to their uniqueness, experiences may be particularly memorable. This, in fact, was evidenced in experiment 3’s data indicating that people in the experiential condition found it slightly easier to recall their purchase than did people in the material condition (this is discussed in detail next, under the heading ‘Time Passed and Memories of Objects versus Experiences’).

In short, the Von Restorff Effect appears applicable in shedding further light on relations this dissertation investigates.

**Recency Effect.** According to findings in this literature, the order in which information is presented biases people (Murdock, 1962). Precisely, people tend to display a cognitive bias towards information that is salient in their minds as a result of a recent observation or stimuli. In a recent investigation, Redelmeier, Katz, and Kahneman (2003) showed how the temporal aspect of an experience influences the way people recall and evaluate that experience. In Redelmeier, et al. (2003), half of the patients undergoing a colonoscopy were subjected to an extra 60-second period of examination during which discomfort was lower than that experienced during the normal procedure. Despite the longer duration, those people, compared to others in the control group, rated the overall experience as less unpleasant. With regards to this dissertation, the recency of the purchase may make its details more easily recalled and, in turn, lead to a richer sharing activity. With this concern in mind, I assessed in experiment 3 the time passed since the purchase was made. As previously discussed, no significant difference was found between participants in the material and experiential conditions, suggesting that the higher sharing of experiences ensues independent of the purchase's recency.

**Choice-Supportive Bias.** Past work has examined the imperfections and vulnerability to biases of memory recollections. Wilson and Ross (2001), for instance, found evidence that people degrade their past personalities in order to show that their present one is an improved version. This desire to portray oneself positively extends also to the choices we make. People tend, for example, to attribute more positive features to the options they make versus the alternative options—the ones they pass (Mather, Shafir, and Johnson, 2000). Such distortion of what is remembered appears particularly beneficial for buyers of material objects. This rationale comes from Rosenzweig and Gilovich's (2012) finding that material (vs. experiential) purchases

tend to lead to more regret of action (i.e., regret for making the purchase). Hence, it is possible that individuals feel a greater need to justify such purchases and, on the process of doing so, distort their memories to make the purchase seem more positive than it actually is. Interestingly, results from my own content analyses provide some support to that.

In these analyses, two independent raters who were blind to the study's purposes evaluated the writings of experiment 1 across various dimensions. Initial findings indicate that people mention motives of (or justifications for) making material purchases more often than motives of making experiential purchases ( $M_{\text{material}} = .48$  vs.  $M_{\text{experiential}} = .23$ ,  $p = .007$ ). This stronger need to justify material (vs. experiential) purchases seems a natural way of dealing with regret. Perhaps distorting one's memory related to choice-making and using that memory to justify the purchase is a form of alleviating the negative feeling of regret.

An additional point about these content analyses relates to people's recalling of experiences (vs. objects) as being more social. Precisely, findings show that mentions of social interactions appear significantly more often in writings about experiential purchases than in those about material purchases ( $M_{\text{material}} = .07$  vs.  $M_{\text{experiential}} = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This is consistent with existing works demonstrating that experiential purchases are more social than material purchases (Caprariello and Reis, 2013; Howell and Hill, 2009). As it relates to this dissertation, this is important because, since people conceive of experiential (vs. material) purchases as more social, participants in the experiential purchase condition may have memories of sharing more salient in their minds. In turn, that could constitute an explanation for why they report being more inclined to share, as compared to participants in the material purchase condition. Therefore, this initial finding from the content analysis confirms the importance of measuring friendship-related variables in experiment 1 (i.e., number of close friends, and number of sharing partners with

whom the participant often talks about details of her life). These measures intended to assess whether memories of sharing in fact were more salient in the experiential (vs. the material) purchase condition. As results showed, there was no difference in the two measures between the two experimental conditions. Additionally, the finding from the content analysis confirms the appropriateness of an experiment that controlled the sociality of the purchase (i.e., experiment 2).

## **Retrieval Cues**

To explore memory further, I will discuss how retrieval cues may affect the recalling and subsequent sharing of material and experiential purchases. As mentioned earlier, Berger and Schwartz (2011) found that environmental cues and public visibility are important drivers of sharing. Specifically, they showed that products that are more visible and/or are cued more by the environment more often become topics of conversation. Based on this finding, it seems plausible to expect that, as a result of their tangibility, objects are shared more than experiences—an expectation that contradicts my findings. How can this apparent conflict be resolved? As the expected regard mediation demonstrates, the teller's expectation about regard explains why experiences are shared more than objects. Hence, it appears that experiences' ability to put one under a positive light overrides object's visibility and consequential likelihood of being more easily recalled. A curious reader might question further: Why is regard superior to visibility then? A possible explanation is that, whereas the tangibility of objects may serve as a cue for sharing, in reality most of our objects are not within sight during our everyday conversations. This was the case for example in the laboratory setting where three of my six experiments were run.

My data, however, should not underestimate the power of retrieval cues on sharing. In fact, findings of experiment 4 attest to the influence of cuing sharing concepts. In that experiment, participants who thought about a future material purchase expected to share more when sharing behaviors were made salient through verbal cues. As a result, they reported levels of sharing and happiness that paralleled those of participants in the experiential purchase condition.

In this line of thought, it could be interesting to investigate further how environmental cues affect sharing. For instance, do people share about unique experiences (e.g., a trip to a remote destination) more than about common experiences (e.g., a trip to a popular destination) if at the moment of sharing they are at an unfamiliar place (e.g., a city park they had never been to) versus a familiar one (e.g., a city park they visit often)?

### **Sharing's Effect on Memory**

Sharing requires recalling and provides opportunity to elaborate and rehearse. This idea was echoed in Gable et al.'s (2004, p. 229) explanation that "sharing a positive event with others requires retelling the event, which creates an opportunity for reliving and reexperiencing the event." Relatedly, Rime et al. (1998, p. 25) asserted that "talking about an emotional memory can reactivate event-related emotional feelings." Naturally, it is likely that memories of a shared topic are strengthened as a result. This is commonly the case for example in the education realm. Scholars often chat about how their teaching (i.e., sharing of their knowledge) helps them better understand and even learn about their own research. I suppose it also makes their knowledge more accessible and well-organized.



In line with this view, Langston (1994) proposed that the benefits the individual gains from sharing about positive events (and idea he coined as *Capitalization*) could be due to the stronger memories resulting from sharing. Gable et al. (2004) empirically tested this proposition and found strong support for it. Specifically, sharing more about a positive event increased memorability of that event.

Bringing this discussion to the consumption realm, the question becomes: Does sharing about material versus experiential purchases affect the memories of those purchases differently? This is important because it may provide an explanation of the mediating effect of sharing on happiness. It is possible that the intangibility of experiences leads to more forgetting and, relatedly, that the sharing of experiences is more beneficial for memorability. On the other hand, experiences have a beginning, a middle, and an end, which may create stronger memories of it (compared to objects that usually have a less structured 'story' characterized mostly by its features). In this second scenario, it may be that one's memories of objects benefit more from sharing.

Data from experiment 3 allow for an examination of these conflicting views. Precisely, in that study I assessed 1) the number of people with whom participants had shared about the purchase before participating in the study, and 2) how easy they found to recall and write about the purchase (which may serve as a proxy for memorability). I ran a regression analysis with purchase type and number of people shared as independent variables and easiness of recalling as dependent variable. Results indicated that sharing with more people did not affect the memories of material and experiential purchases differently ( $\beta = -.154, p = .3$ ). Hence, the evidence I collected does not support the proposition that telling others about one's experiences versus

objects makes either more memorable, and thus cannot explain further the results of experiment 3.

Besides memorability, sharing also affects teller's evaluation of and intentions toward the shared topic. Specifically, from a set of four studies, Moore (2012) found that the use of explaining language influences the teller's evaluations of and intentions to recommend, repeat, and retell stories about their experiences. The author clarified that explaining (vs. non-explaining) language tend to increase the teller's understanding of the consumption experience. She found that this increased understanding diminished the teller's evaluations of and intentions related to positive and negative hedonic experiences. On the other hand, the teller's evaluations of and intentions toward utilitarian experiences were magnified by this advanced understanding that results from the use of explaining language.

In conclusion, sharing increases memorability. Based on experiment 3's data, this effect is not qualified by purchase type (material versus experiential). Sharing's effect, however, goes beyond memory. Research has shown that the language used in sharing (explaining vs. non-explaining) affects differently the teller of hedonic and that of utilitarian experiences.

### **Time Passed and Memories of Objects versus Experiences**

Because people adapt more slowly to experiences than to objects, in the long-run experiences are better able to advance happiness than are objects (Nicolao et al., 2009). This finding highlights the importance of examining whether experiences are also more memorable and thus easier to recall as compared to objects, particularly as time passes.

Another indication of the relevance of this inquiry comes from research showing that people tend to recall things that are consistent with their present affect (Natale and Hantas, 1982). This finding is critical because participants in experiment 1 were asked to recall purchases that were made with the intension of advancing happiness and enjoyment in life. If experiences (vs. objects) were better able to advance happiness even before people shared about them, then it would follow that the (happier) participants in my experiments would find it easier to recall experiences as compared to the (less happy) participants who recalled objects.

In experiment 3, participants answered on a 7-point scale (1 = Very Easy; 7 = Very Difficult) the question: Please indicate on the scale below, how easy or difficult you found the task of recalling the details of the grill you described in the first part of the study. Recalling the information I wrote was:. Results showed a marginally significant difference, suggesting that the recall of material purchases ( $M = 3.6$ ) was more difficult than that of experiential purchases ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $F(1, 47) = 3.33$ ,  $p = .07$ ). With regards to the passage of time, results suggested insignificant correlations between 1) the time participants have owned the grill and the easiness of recalling the object ( $r = .23$ ,  $p = .25$ ), and 2) the time participants have owned the grill and the easiness in recalling the experience ( $r = .05$ ,  $p = .8$ ). Hence, whereas inconclusive, it appears that people have a harder time recalling details of an object than of an experience. That, however, is not qualified by passage of time.

In light of this, the next critical question is: Do people share about experiences more because they are more easily recalled? To address this question I conducted four regression analyses (*a-d*) and a bootstrap test of mediation. I found (*a*) that participants in the experiential (vs. material) purchase condition reported higher levels of sharing ( $\beta = 1.01$ ,  $t = 2.22$ ,  $p = .031$ ), (*b*) that they found it marginally significantly easier to recall experiential (vs. material) purchases

( $\beta = -.86, t = -1.82, p = .074$ ), and (c) that easiness of recall had an insignificant effect on sharing ( $\beta = -.17, t = -1.26, p = .213$ ). Importantly, (d) by including easiness of recall in the model, I found that the previously significant effect of purchase type on sharing became marginally significant ( $\beta = .85, t = 1.83, p = .073$ ). Finally, the bootstrap test showed that easiness of recall did not mediate the effect of purchase type on sharing ( $\beta = .14, CI(95\%) = -.06, .71$ ).

In sum, whereas people seem to find the recalling of experiences easier than that of objects, this effect does not account for why they are more inclined to share about the former than the latter.

### **Limitations of Present Studies**

First, in all experiments reported here I relied on laboratory and online experiments to 1) operationalize material versus experiential purchases, 2) depict sharing situations, and 3) assess happiness. While I would have liked to have examined my hypotheses in a real world context, the financial costs associated with doing so prevented me from doing so. A possible approach to investigate the sharing mediation in a natural setting would be to provide participants with an amount of money and instruct them to spend it on a material or an experiential purchase. Following the purchase, the researcher could then monitor amount of sharing and levels of happiness by using a diary procedure. Such methodology would add external validity to the results of this dissertation, but it is not clear that the additional insight would merit the cost of conducting this research.

A second potential limitation of this dissertation concerns the assessment of happiness. Across all experiments, I measured the construct with only one two-item scale. Besides possible issues associated with using a single instrument, the studies may have suffered from limitations

associated with self-reported measures, such as biases (e.g., social desirability). To address this, indirect measures of happiness could be employed (some of which were discussed earlier under the subheading ‘Measurements’, under the heading ‘Happiness versus Satisfaction’).

An additional possible concern relates to the fact that, in experiment 3, the focal purchase was of a material nature (i.e., BBQ grill). It might be beneficial to also test the framing effect by using an experiential purchase as the focal purchase and asking participants to frame it either in experiential or in material terms. Despite the positive outcomes such an experiment could conceivably generate, it is important to recognize that framing an experiential purchase in material terms maybe infeasible to do in a realistic manner.

Finally, the results of the expected regard mediation in experiments 1 and 2 yielded only a partial (vs. full) mediation effect. Hence, there are several other processes potentially able to explain people’s higher inclination to share about experiential (vs. material) purchases. I examined three possible ones: 1) that experiential purchases are inherently more social (experiments 1 and 2), 2) that tellers expect listeners to enjoy conversations about experiential (vs. material) purchases more, and 3) that experiential (vs. material) purchases generate more happiness even before the individual shares (experiments 3, 5, and 6). Results showed disconfirming evidence to these possible explanations. A comprehensive examination of these additional potential mediators could consider factors associated with the listener (e.g., her perceived level of materialism), and the nature of the purchase (e.g., self- vs. market-created).

### **Future Research Opportunities**

I hope that this dissertation carries within it the seeds of future investigations. I have presented here a mediated-mediation model, but our understanding of expected regard, sharing, and happiness will certainly advance with the discovery of other mediators and moderators. I discuss potential ones next.

In terms of other mediators, my findings raise questions about why people expect to be more highly regarded as a result of sharing experiential (vs. material) purchases. A plausible reason is that experiential (but not material) purchases are virtually unaffected by the negative stigmas attached to materialism. Alternatively, it may be that experiences are better than objects at conveying the message that the teller leads a meaningful life. Moreover, it could be that experiential purchases' greater closeness to ones' self (Carter and Gilovich, 2010) naturally makes them a better conveyor of one's qualities and, as a result, a preferred means of gaining regard. Lastly, because experiences are seen as more unique than objects (Rosenzweig and Gilovich, 2012), people might hope that talking about novel topics will grant them more positive regard.

To delve deeper in the topic of expected regard, I discuss next agentic versus communal regard. In doing so, I consider three theoretical lenses through which agentic and communal regard may be looked: collectivists versus individualists, need for uniqueness, and optimal distinctiveness theory.

## **Agentic versus Communal Regard**

Research has identified groups of individuals that commonly seek to stand out from the crowd (individualists) and other groups that tend to pursue integration and commonality (collectivists). Because collectivists tend to view themselves as part of the whole, it is possible that they seek reputation and recognition for the group. On the other hand, individuals who “are motivated by their own preferences, needs, and rights, giving priority to personal rather than to group goals (Triandis, 1995, p. 2)” seem more likely to seek reputation and recognition for themselves. Thus, one might speculate that in the consumption realm, individualists tend to invest in purchases likely to improve their own regard, whereas collectivists tend to spend their resources in purchases likely to advance group regard and group cohesion.

The individual characteristic related to need for uniqueness is another perspective from which to discuss agentic versus communal regard. Need for uniqueness is defined as “an individual's pursuit of differentness relative to others that is achieved through the acquisition, utilization, and disposition of consumer goods for the purpose of developing and enhancing one's personal and social identity (Tian, Bearden, and Hunter, 2001, p. 50).” In light of this, one might wonder whether unique (vs. common) consumption behaviors are relatively more related with agentic (vs. communal) regard.

Yet another perspective from which to look at agentic versus communal regard comes from optimal distinctiveness theory. The theory suggests that, in order to fulfill the competing goals of distinctiveness and belongingness, individuals prefer to be associated with groups with particular characteristics (Brewer, 1991). Small groups offer the optimal scenario for the fulfillment of both needs. They provide a sense of belongingness but also a feeling of

distinctiveness from most other individuals in the environment. In this context, it seems possible that members of small groups will tend to seek communal regard. That, in turn, is likely to strengthen their integration with the group and therefore their sense of belongingness, while also increasing their sense of uniqueness through the group's singular reputation/identity. On the other hand, it appears likely that members of large groups will primarily seek agentic regard, since large groups provide for belongingness but not for uniqueness.

Based on these literatures, one might speculate that: 1) collectivists seek communal regard whereas individualists pursue agentic regard, 2) compared to common consumption behaviors (e.g., lodging at a regular hotel), unique consumption behaviors (e.g., lodging at an icy hotel) are more related to agentic regard, and 3) members of small groups seek communal regard whereas members of large groups pursue agentic regard.

I suggest that future research on these questions may be fruitful as it would shed light on conditions under which people attempt to improve their own regard versus the regard of the group to which they belong.

Besides the relation between purchase type, expected regard, and sharing, it is also useful to reflect on process explanations that underlie the positive effect of sharing on happiness. One potential mechanism concerns the social bonds created among the parties involved in the sharing activity (Altman and Taylor, 1973). Another relates to the opportunity that sharing provides for reliving and reexperiencing the shared purchase (Gable et al., 2004). Yet another is that sharing strengthens the teller's memory (Langston, 1994). A final possibility is that sharing provides the teller with an opportunity to confirm, through positive feedback, that the purchase was a wise expenditure.



Related to this discussion, the results of experiment 4 reveal that sharing highly about both material and experiential purchases advances similar levels of happiness. Therefore, although there may be particularities linked to the sharing of experiences, we now know that high inclination to share about objects also has strong potential of advancing happiness. This knowledge, however, still does not fully clarify the link between sharing and happiness. Therefore, the question remains unanswered and the possible explanations mentioned on the above paragraph offer fertile grounds for future research. To explore this topic further, I discuss later some forms of sharing and how they may inform us about reasons for the positive effect of sharing on happiness.

With regards to variables that may moderate the relations already explained by my model, a promising route is to investigate individual characteristics and purchase-related characteristics.

### **Individual Characteristics**

As this dissertation's results showed, creating a positive image for oneself in the eyes of others is key in the decision to share. In line with this idea, it is possible that people will share about objects more than (or as much as) about experiences if they know that the listener is highly materialistic. Knowing that information assures the teller that the listener is likely to welcome the conversation and likely to view the teller favorably.

Still on the topic of individual characteristics, past research has suggested that collectivistic people are less concerned than their individualistic counterparts with increasing regard in the eyes of others (Diener et al., 1999). It may be, therefore, that the greater inclination

to share about experiences is more evidenced among individualistic than among collectivistic individuals.

Because experiment 3 used a diverse sample population, it allows for some examination of personal characteristics. To recap, participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions. Half were asked to frame a BBQ grill in material terms and the other half to frame it in experiential terms. Their inclination to tell others about the purchase was later assessed with 7-point scales. They also reported their age, which ranged from 18 to 67, with a mean of 34 years. A correlation analysis between age and inclination to share showed that for material purchases, age and inclination to share were uncorrelated. For experiential purchases, on the other hand, a medium effect of .336 ( $p = .09$ ) was found. Nevertheless, a regression intended to identify a possible interaction of age by purchase type yielded an insignificant result ( $p > .1$ ).

Hence, data from experiment 3 offer some indication that, compared to younger people, older individuals have a preference for sharing experiential (vs. material) purchases. Whereas this indication must be treated as inconclusive given the lack of a consistently significant pattern of results, stronger evidence may be obtained from studies that include a larger number of individuals at advanced ages—in experiment 3 only two out of the 48 participants were older than 55.

Experiment 3's data also allow for an evaluation of the relation between happiness and the personal characteristics of age and gender. Whereas no association between gender and happiness was present in the data, a significant correlation between age and happiness was ( $r = .36, p = .01$ ). By looking at this correlation separately for material and experiential purchases, I found that it is stronger among participants in the experiential purchase condition ( $r = .383, p = .07$ ) than among participants in the material purchase condition ( $r = .33, p = .1$ ). Whereas this

suggests that the positive relation between age and happiness is restricted to participants in the experiential purchase condition, a regression analysis with purchase type and age as independent variables and happiness as dependent variable did not yield a significant interaction effect ( $p = .93$ ).

In sum, as it was the case for sharing, happiness does not appear in my data as having a consistent relation with the personal characteristics of age and gender. However, future studies could study more closely which individual characteristics are often associated with higher levels of happiness in material purchasers.

### **Purchase-Related Characteristics**

In terms of purchase-related characteristics, it is possible that, because of their tangible qualities, self-created objects (e.g., self-carved marble statue) are better than self-created experiences (e.g., self-planned trip) in portraying the positive qualities of its creator. As a result, creators of objects may share more than creators of experiences, and in turn enjoy greater happiness.

In addition, certain objects possess the property of being ‘conversation pieces’. Objects with this characteristic often become topics of conversation. Interestingly, they appear to release their owners of the responsibility of initiating the conversation. In fact, they seem to invite others’ comments. Examples range from a stylish hat, to a shiny motorcycle, to unique accessory used to embellish one’s pet. In line with this, I expect that these objects’ proneness to generate consumer conversation makes them particularly powerful sources of happiness.

One of this dissertation's goals is to determine how sharing influences an emotional variable—i.e., happiness. Researchers interested in this investigation stream may extend it by examining how sharing influences other types of variables. Two such variables are discussed next (i.e., consumer preference, and healthy behaviors).

We know consumers sometimes prefer unpleasant and novel experiences over comfortable and common ones. Research has shown that those consumers tend to be production driven, and their preference addresses their desire to make progress, use time productively, and reach accomplishments (Keinan and Kivetz, 2012). Keinan and Kivetz (2012, p. 937) explained that those “consumers derive utility from collecting new experiences and “checking off” items on their “experiential check list” (or “experiential CV”). By expanding their collection of diverse experiences, consumers obtain a sense of accomplishment and progress.” I speculate that, similar to people's ‘productivity focus’, sharing is another influencer of consumer's preference for unique versus common purchases. The rationale is rather simple: Imagine having the opportunity to stay at a freezing ice hotel (vs. a regular hotel) knowing that you will later have plenty of (vs. few) chances to share about it with friends and family members. As this illustrative example intends to show, sharing is especially valuable for unique purchases. As such, I propose that if consumers are reminded (vs. deprived) of sharing, they will prefer unique (vs. common) purchases. In other words, sharing increases preference for unique purchases.

With regards to healthy behaviors, Reimann (2013) showed that receiving a material reward serves as a substitute for other pleasure rewards that, from a health point of view, are undesirable (e.g., over-eating). Precisely, he found that giving people objects (e.g., a toy) leads them to eat less. Neuroscience research has demonstrated that talking about oneself (vs. talking about somebody else) is intrinsically rewarding. Precisely, self-disclosure activates the same

regions of the brain that light up for food and sex (Tamir and Mitchell, 2012). The researchers found that talking about oneself is so rewarding that people are willing to forgo money in order to engage in the behavior. To the extent that talking about oneself is intrinsically rewarding, it appears likely that motivating people to engage in self-disclosure may lead them to also enact healthy behaviors (a rationale consistent with Reiman (2013)).

An investigation into this question could become even more interesting if one considers that the effect of self-disclosure on healthy behavior may be mediated by a variable other than reward. Specifically, talking about oneself may actually bring the individual's attention to herself, and this increased self-awareness may in turn be the driver of healthy behavior.

I will discuss next two literatures that enrich our thinking about future research opportunities. The goal is to use this broader set of ideas to develop further the array of research possibilities.

### **Self-Verification Theory**

According to self-verification theory, a person tends to form an image of herself and to verify it through the feedback she receives from others. Because this image provides her a sense of composure and certainty, and indicates that the world is knowable and coherent (Swann, 1983) she favors feedback that confirms it. Consequently, she tends to seek (withdraw from) interactions that offer feedback that is consistent (inconsistent) with the way she perceives herself (Swann, De La Ronde, and Hixon, 1994). Considering that objects often become part of an extended self (Belk, 1988) and that, similarly, experiences are seen as reflective of one's true

sense of self (Carter and Gilovich, 2010), it seems natural that self-verification theory readily applies to the context of this dissertation.

Participants of the experiments presented here have indicated that they expect to be more positively regarded as a result of telling others about experiences versus objects. Self-verification theory would therefore predict that when such expectation is (not) met, people are likely to gravitate towards (distance themselves from) the individual providing the feedback.

The potential implications of this idea are fascinating. For example, it is understandable that the teller of an experience would withdraw from a relation in which the listener provides lower-than-expected feedback. However, it is intriguing to imagine that, as self-verification theory suggests, a teller of a material purchase would withdraw from a relationship in which the listener reacts more positively-than-expected. These possible effects would raise the questions: What motivates the teller's distancing from the listener? Would she attach negative characteristics to the listener (e.g., envious, false, unable to comprehend the shared message, socially unfit)?

Besides the withdrawing effect, it would be interesting to identify strategies used by tellers who receive feedback that is inconsistent with their identities. Swann, Gamez, Seyle, Morales, and Huici (2009) for example found that, following disconfirming feedback, people often engage in actions that reaffirm their identities. In line with this, should we expect that, after a negative feedback, tellers of experiences seek opportunities to reaffirm? Alternatively, it is possible that tellers of material and experiential purchases engage in other behaviors to deal with contradicting feedback. I suggest they may 1) misattribute the inconsistency by derogating its source, 2) seek further verification that clarifies their identity (Swann and Read, 1981), 3) adjust their self concept to accommodate the new information (Scherr, Madon, Gyll, Willard, and

Spoth, 2011), or 4) dismiss the feedback altogether. Besides identifying the strategies used, it would be instructive to understand whether some of these behaviors are more appropriate for tellers of material versus tellers of experiential purchases.

This debate is especially fascinating because it extends the scope of this dissertation beyond the relation between sharing and happiness to include the relation between sharing and future behaviors (e.g., withdrawing from a relationship, reaffirming, etc.).

### **Cognitive-Experiential Self-Theory**

The cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST; Epstein, 1983) proposes two modes of processing some event, object, or person. The experiential system is automatic, associative, holistic, and intuitive. Because it is fast and guided by past experiences, the experiential system is often operant in trivial contexts. In these contexts, information processing occurs outside of our awareness and little is required in terms of cognitive capacity.

On the other hand, the cognitive or rational system is logical, conscious, effortful, deliberate, and systematic. It uses codes (e.g., numbers and words) to create vivid representation of what is being interpreted. Contrary to the experiential system, the cognitive system operates whenever our limited cognitive capacities are called for (e.g., when our conscious attention is required).

In examining people's preference for thinking styles, the REI (Rational Experiential Inventory) assesses the two systems through faith in intuition (experiential system) and need for cognition (cognitive system). Preference for the experiential system is associated with positive characteristics such as creativity, spontaneity, and agreeableness. It is however also linked to

negative ones like authoritarianism and stereotypical thinking (Kemmelmeier, 2009; Norris and Epstein, 2011). The cognitive system, on the other hand, is related to decreased levels of anxiety and depression, and increased levels of academic achievement, self-esteem, and openness to experiences (Norris and Epstein, 2011; Sladek, Bond, and Phillips, 2010).

With regards to this dissertation, the CEST appears particularly appropriate for the pursuit of a deeper understanding of the psychological process(es) evoked during sharing. For the following reasons, I propose that the cognitive (vs. experiential) system is more prevalent in the sharing behavior: First, sharing requires cognitive effort in the form of a) recalling details of the topic to be shared, b) selecting and organizing symbols in order to express the message and convey meaning, and c) interpreting feedback. Second, and related to the previous point, it involves verbalization. Third, it is a conscious behavior in which the individual often deliberates about depth, breath, and duration (Cozby, 1973). Fourth, it is permeated by systematic considerations which often include the consequences of revealing, disclosing, or admitting.

My proposition that sharing predominantly evokes the cognitive system is also consistent with the research mentioned above indicating that the cognitive system is associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety (two emotional conditions that are often treated as opposites of happiness). In other words, this dissertation has shown that sharing is associated with happiness, and extant research has shown that, out of the two thinking systems, the cognitive is the one linked to lower levels of negative emotional states. It thus seems likely that sharing primarily involves the cognitive (vs. experiential) system.

Evidence supporting my expectation that the cognitive system predominates during sharing would offer an improved comprehension of why sharing affects happiness. Specifically, it would indicate that the cognitive engagement evoked during sharing leads to a better



understanding of the shared topic. This, in turn, is likely to prolong the happiness associated with the shared topic. In more concrete terms, sharing may allow the teller to discover functionalities of an electronic device she recently bought (material purchase) or better understand the plot of a play she recently saw (experiential purchase), both of which are likely to prolong the purchase's positive effect on the consumer's happiness.

Next, I discuss the concepts of happiness and satisfaction. More specifically, I will present findings indicating that the two behave differently when subjected to the same antecedent. Then, I elaborate on how that difference offers opportunities for future work.

## **Happiness and Satisfaction**

In Chapter 2, I discussed the conceptual differences between happiness and satisfaction. I argued that they are distinct constructs, with different antecedents. My empirical work supports this contention. In experiment I measured satisfaction in addition to happiness. Participants answered three items on a 100 scale to indicate their satisfaction with their purchase. The result of an ANOVA test indicated that participants in the experiential and material purchase conditions drew statistically similar levels of satisfaction from their purchases ( $F(1, 94) = .77, p = .38$ ). This finding suggests that whereas happiness is influenced differently by experiential and material purchases (a finding presented in experiment 1's result section), satisfaction is unaffected by these different types of purchases. Of note, the fact that the same driver (purchase type) affects one construct (happiness) but not the other (satisfaction) is consistent with the conceptual differences discussed earlier.

Future work may examine possible conditions under which material and experiential purchases advance dissimilar levels of satisfaction. Alternatively, researchers may investigate potential influences of sharing on consumer satisfaction. Let's take for example the case of a consumer whose expectation was not met and who, as a result, experiences dissatisfaction. Is it possible that sharing leads her to reconsider her (high) expectation, which in turn decreases her dissatisfaction?

Given the strong relevance of the concept of sharing to this dissertation, I now return to it and offer a final and thorough discussion about that behavior. The discussion elaborates on forms of sharing, on the ways people share information about themselves and the effects of bragging, and finally, on the related literature on self-disclosure.

### **Forms of Sharing**

Studies on interpersonal communication have investigated various forms of the behavior (e.g., written, verbal). In this part I review research investigating different forms of sharing.

In her JCR Ferber Award Winning article investigating how the content of word-of-mouth influences the teller, Moore (2012) utilized online written communication in the form of Amazon.com reviews (study 1), recalled purchases that participants freely wrote about (study 2), and recalled purchases that participants wrote about by filling in the blanks of provided sentences (studies 3A and 3B). Her findings suggested that explaining language affects teller's evaluations of intentions to recommend, repeat, and retell stories related to their experiences.

Similarly, to study how emotional instability influences one's choice of communication channel and well-being, Buechel and Berger's ongoing research has investigated Facebook posts

(study 1) and e-mail messages (study 2). Their results have demonstrated that emotionally unstable people are particularly more prone to share information about themselves and to write about their emotions in the process. Moreover, they found that this behavior helps such individuals repair well-being after a negative experience.

Also using written communication (i.e., email messages that participants wrote), Wojnicki and Godes (2008) examined the effect of desire to self-enhance on sharing behavior. Results indicated that self-enhancement is an important goal that influences when and what consumers share.

In other works, the format of the communication was not explicitly specified. Precisely, Gable et al. (2004, study 1) provided participants with a diary and asked them 1) to write the most positive and most negative event of the day, and 2) to report how much they shared about each event. In this study, it is not known the means of communication people used to share. Findings indicated that sharing positive (but not negative) events leads to the intrapersonal benefit of stronger memories of the shared event. Also, sharing leads to interpersonal benefits in the form of relationship well-being.

Differently from the above investigations, Mehl et al. (2010) used the EAR methodology to collect a rich body of audio data. The EAR (Electronically Activated Recorder) enabled them to record ambient sound (some of which was interpersonal communication) at random times during the day. With that approach, the authors identified that substantive conversations (vs. small talk) is associated with higher levels of happiness.

Bringing this discussion to the context of this dissertation, a relevant question is: Is it likely that the mediating function of sharing varies across different types of communication (e.g., verbal, written, display, body language, sign language)? To tackle this question, it is useful to

consider the possible reasons why sharing cultivates happiness. Langston (1994) hypothesized and Gable, et al. (2004) offered empirical evidence that sharing about positive events makes such events more memorable. Alternatively, sharing's benefits can also come in the form of increased socio-affectivity (Rime and Paez, 2007). Yet another reason is that sharing "creates an opportunity for reliving and reexperiencing the event" (Gable et al., 2004, p. 229).

Based on these ideas, if sharing advances happiness because it strengthens the teller's memory of the shared topic (Gable et al., 2004), it is likely that the means through which sharing happens will not be of influence.

On the other hand, if sharing's effect on happiness is due to stronger social bonds, more personal forms of sharing (e.g., in-person verbal communication) are likely to be more beneficial than less personal forms (e.g., e-mail message).

Finally, if sharing's benefit comes from the reexperiencing of the shared event, it may be that communication that takes place through discontinuous channels (e.g., email) generates more positive outcomes than does communication that takes place through continuous channels (e.g., face-to-face). This proposition finds support on Berger and Iyengar's (2012) discovery that the channel used in the communication affects what gets discussed. Precisely, because discontinuous communication channels include pauses in the conversation, more interesting topics are recalled and discussed. As a result, it is possible that discontinuous channels generate discussions that include more nuanced and interesting details, which in turn offer a richer reliving experience.

As this discussion illustrates, there are plenty of interesting questions that have not yet been addressed. Future research might focus on these various aspects of sharing to explain its positive effect on happiness.

### Sharing of Positive Information about the Self

This dissertation proposes and shows that looking good in the eyes of the listener is an important goal of the teller. In other words, when individuals allow others to know about themselves and about relevant aspects of their lives, they often hope to obtain positive reactions that will help them reassure and enhance their sense of self (Goffman, 1974).

To self enhance, people may adopt various strategies. One is to adopt a careful approach when sharing sensitive information. Corrigan and Matthews (2003) found that people tend to “test the waters” before telling others about stigmatized information. Only if they perceive that the information will be well-received, do they go forward with disclosing the entire information.

In line with this desire to elicit positive reaction from the listener, research has shown that people tend to avoid sharing with low self-esteem listeners (MacGregor and Holmes, 2011). MacGregor and Holmes (2011) also found that people share less with low self-esteem others because they fear those listeners will react poorly in response.

In pursuing self-enhancement through sharing, people also manage the type of information they share. Precisely, consumers tend to share positive information about experiences *they* had. On the other hand, they are more likely to share about negative information about experiences that *others* had (De Angeles, Bonezzi, Peluso, Rucker, and Costabile, 2012).

This desire to elicit positive reaction and to look good in the eyes of others suggests that bragging is sometimes part of sharing. In line with this idea, Ozcan (2004, p. 20-21) wrote:

“Word-of-mouth conversations can be entered into in order to advance the interests of the self. In these situations, product-related comments, opinions,

disclosures, and recommendations serve as mere accessories. Whyte (1954) vividly documented how consumers used latest product news or experiences as “conversational gambits” in social exchanges with their neighbors. Dichter’s (1966) research revealed that consumers construct, assert, and affirm their sense of self as they use word-of-mouth as a tactic to gain attention, exhibit connoisseurship, suggest pioneering spirit, demonstrate insider information, connote status, evangelize, confirm own judgment, and assert superiority. Arndt (1967b) cited evidence from prior rumor literature on ego-defense and projection motives of word-of-mouth behavior, i.e., deflecting blame onto products and services in an effort to maintain self-esteem and to save face. Gatignon and Robertson (1986) argued that social exchange theory would predict word-of-mouth supply to be motivated by status and power needs.”

Consistently, Langston (1994, p. 1113) explained that the sharing of positive events “might include jumping of joy, bragging to others, or taking people out to dinner to celebrate.” Thus, together with evidence suggesting that looking good in the eyes of the listener is an important goal, researchers (e.g., Ozcan, 2004; Langston, 2004) have indicated that bragging is likely present in sharing.

Whereas Langston appears to consider bragging a positive and desirable behavior, studies on social comparison (e.g., Argo, White, and Dahl, 2006) suggest that upward comparison is a strong source of feelings of self-threat and that threatened individuals tend to enact negative behaviors (e.g., to deceive) in order to protect their selves. In the same vein, in occasions when the teller is perceived to brag and, importantly, when such behavior posits a threat to the listener’s self, the likely result is unfavorable reaction by the listener. As it has been

shown in the sharing literature (Gable, Gonzaga, and Strachman, 2006), listener's positive response is an important component to sharing's success; therefore, it seems plausible that bragging that presents a threat to the listener's self is likely to hinder or diminish sharing's ability to generate favorable rewards (e.g., happiness).

I turn next to a discussion on the self-disclosure paradigm. To a large extent, this research stream relates to the sharing one and, importantly, substantiates the relations proposed in my model.

### **Self-Disclosure**

Self-disclosure has been broadly defined as “any information about himself which Person A communicates verbally to a Person B (Cozby, 1973, p. 73).” Collins and Miller (1994) explained that this information may be of a descriptive or evaluative nature. According to them, a descriptive self-disclosure could take the form of, “I see myself as an environmentalist person”, and an evaluative self-disclosure could be, “I am anxious about my first day at the new job”. While these definitions and examples appear to focus only on information that is directly linked to the individual herself (i.e., how she perceives herself and her emotions), Collins and Miller (1994) recognized that one's expression of preference (e.g., one's favorite musical group) also constitutes self-disclosure. Hence, disclosure may involve information associated with both the discloser herself and reality outside of the discloser. Omarzu (2000) added to this outward view of self-disclosure by mentioning “experiences” (p. 174) as a topic that one may disclose to others. Therefore, self-disclosure is the communication of information that pertains to the

communicator's personality, emotion, and/or experiences with the outside world. Thus, the self-disclosure literature is clearly within the conceptual realm of sharing.

In characterizing the types of information that are disclosed, the self-disclosure literature has adopted three intensity-related parameters: breadth (i.e., the amount of information disclosed), depth (i.e., the level of intimacy of the information disclosed), and duration of time that the teller spends disclosing (Cozby, 1973). Of those three dimensions, breadth and depth predominate in self-disclosure studies (including Altman and Taylor's (1973) influential Social Penetration Theory).

According to social penetration theory (Altman and Taylor, 1973) the development of interpersonal relationships occurs through a reciprocal and increasingly deepening exchange of information. The theory holds that in the early stages of a relationship, people tend to exchange information with low levels of intimacy. As the relationship progresses and closeness increases, so does the breadth (i.e., amount) and depth (i.e., intimacy) of the information disclosed. This richer information may be transferred verbally and nonverbally, as well as through the types of activities engaged by the parties. In relation to this dissertation's model, this theory may shed light on the link between sharing and happiness. Given the richness of experiences (vs. objects), which usually form a story with a beginning, a middle, and an end, it is possible that experiences allow the individual to engage in deeper and broader sharing, and consequently develop stronger social relationships—a powerful source of happiness (Diener and Seligman, 2002).

Social penetration theory also highlights the importance of interpersonal reward/cost factors on which relationship development (and therefore information exchange) depends. Those cost/benefit factors pertain to past, present, and possible future exchanges.



In short, social penetration theory holds that individuals advance their relationships with each other by disclosing increasingly higher levels of information, and that one's decision to proceed or not with such process depends on her evaluation of the costs and benefits gained from the relationship.

A central component in self-disclosure is the idea of reciprocity (Aron, 1991). As Homans (1958, p. 606) explained, "Social behavior is an exchange of goods, material goods but also non-material ones, such as the symbols of approval or prestige." According to the theory, self-disclosure creates a sense of obligation to reciprocate. Homans, (1958, p. 606) explained that point by saying that "Persons that give much to others try to get much from them, and persons that get much from others are under pressure to give much to them. This process of influence tends to work out at equilibrium to a balance in the exchanges." In this exchange system, disclosed information is considered an asset whose value lies on its level of intimacy (Worthy, Gary, and Kahn, 1969).

What happens then when the implicit rule of reciprocity is not followed? Research has indicated that the lack of reciprocity may function as a signal that one of the parties does not intend to deepen the relationship (Miller and Read, 1987). Reciprocity is such a strong aspect of self-disclosure (Rubin, 1975) that it may be strategically used in order to obtain rewards or a sense of obligation from other people (Omarzu, 2000). Hence, evidence abounds that self-disclosure and reciprocity have a strong link.

It is important to note that self-disclosure is by no means a simple behavior. Aron (1997, p. 317) summarized the complexity of self-disclosure by saying that "a central conflict in life is between our desires to be known and not to be known, as well as to know the other and not to

know the other.” He added that, “I do not believe that any of us are ever “transparently real”; we are always revealing and concealing (p. 318).”

This ongoing conflict is easily justifiable when one considers the implications of revealing through self-disclosure. For example, what we tell others plays an important function in how others perceive and regard us. This rationale is fundamental to my model because it points to the reason why people tend to share about experiential purchases more than about material purchases. In other words, people are aware of the implications of telling others about their purchases. Because they expect to be more highly regarded as a result of talking about their experiences (vs. objects), they show a greater inclination to do exactly that.

In the following section, I discuss this dissertation’s contributions to the happiness and sharing literatures, to consumers and marketing professionals, and to marketing as a discipline.

### **Theoretical Contributions to Happiness and Sharing Literatures**

The most significant contribution of this dissertation is the introduction of a new model that explains the superiority of experiential purchases over material purchases in advancing happiness. Whereas other mediating factors (e.g., adaptation, regret, closeness to the self) were previously offered, to my knowledge this work is the first to empirically demonstrate the significance and implications of sharing in the consumer happiness context. While I do not claim that sharing is the only mechanism transmitting the effect of purchase type to happiness, I show that this mechanism alone is significant enough to yield a consistent pattern of results across six experiments.

Besides contributing to the discussion on the association between purchase type and happiness, I add to the sharing literature by offering a model with two antecedents and one consequence of sharing. Specifically, a large number of previous works have investigated either precedents (MacGregor and Holmes, 2011; Wojnicki and Godes, 2008) or consequences (Gable et al., 2004; Langston, 1994) of sharing. The present research, on the other hand, paints a more complete picture by showing circumstances under which people share at different amounts (i.e., when the topic of conversation is a material versus an experiential purchase), a reason for that difference (i.e., expectation of higher regard), a consequence of sharing (i.e., increased happiness), and a way of increasing people's inclination to share more about material purchases (i.e., increasing the salience of sharing through cuing).

Finally, this work's contributions also extend the marketing literature. Precisely, previous studies have illustrated consumers' efforts to associate themselves with specific brands and products (Berger and Heath, 2007; Sirgy, 1982). I demonstrate that consumers are also selective in terms of the categories of purchases (material versus experiential) about which they desire to share and, therefore, associate themselves with.

Before moving to the next section, it is important to clarify my claims of contribution to theory. Notably, I do not claim that people do not share about material purchases nor that material purchases do not advance happiness—only that experiential purchases generally lead to more sharing and thus happiness than do material purchases. In fact, experiment 5 informs us that when people are primed to share about their material purchases, they do so and consequently enjoy high levels of happiness. I also do not claim that sharing is the only driver. On the contrary, I concur with other works showing that factors such as adaptation (Nicolao et al., 2009) and closeness to the self (Carter and Gilovich, 2012) are viable underlying

mechanisms in the effect of purchase type on happiness. So much so that this dissertation's findings parallel the idea brought forward by Carter and Gilovich (2012). That is, by being closer to and more representative of one's self (Carter and Gilovich, 2012), experiential purchases are inherently a better topic for sharing—a behavior that is often driven by desires to improve one's regard. In other words, by telling others about topics that are more representative of one's self (i.e., experiential purchases), the individual is more likely to achieve her goals related to regard enhancement.

Besides the theoretical domain, the relevance of the current work encompasses the consumer and marketer worlds, and the realm of marketing as a discipline. I explain next this dissertation's intended contributions for consumers and marketing professionals.

### **Implications for Consumers and Marketing Professionals**

On a recent article published on Forbes magazine, Eric Savitz (2011) wrote, "Sharing, this common human activity, provides worthwhile insights into the interests and desires of those who are exchanging information and creates a new layer of value in the worlds of online publishing and advertising." This dissertation shows that the benefits resulting from sharing reach beyond those groups of professionals to include the person initiating the sharing. Namely, sharing about a purchase brings happiness to the teller.

Consumers often make purchases with the intent of improving their lives and increasing their happiness. The present investigation joins an expanding number of works that, together, may serve as a guide people use to make decisions regarding how to spend their money. It is hoped, for instance, that this and related works help people shuffle through the overwhelming

amount of factors that influence their decisions (e.g., marketing messages, popular beliefs, experts' recommendations, etc.). For example, in their daily lives consumers are exposed to messages like, "No one ever says, "I take too many vacations"" (a billboard message by Continental Airlines), and "Send FREE electronic postcards to friends & family" (an announcement distributed onboard of Princess Cruises ships). Based on what we now know, buying into both messages by 1) investing in experiential purchases, and 2) sharing about one's cruise trip are both likely to lead to happiness.

Likewise, my findings provide marketing professionals with two tools capable of influencing consumer's sharing behavior and, consequently, happiness. The first tool is encouraging consumers to focus on the experiential aspects of their purchases. As experiment 3 showed, motivating consumers to conceptualize a purchase in experiential (vs. material) terms leads to more sharing and, as a result, increased happiness. Thus, the present results suggest that a marketing campaign focusing on the experiential dimensions of a purchase is likely to generate more sharing and create happier consumers—both of which naturally pay dividends to the company. The following examples of real marketing messages illustrate the idea. Based on my findings, experience-focused messages such as Nokia's 8210 – "Nokia, connecting people.", and BlackBerry's Bold – "Touch, type, together. Create and connect with the new BlackBerry Bold." will likely prove more fruitful than material-focused messages such as Nokia's G14 – "America's first green phone.", and BlackBerry's Pearl 8100 – "The world's smallest smartphones."

The second tool relates to encouragement of sharing behavior. In experiment 4, I demonstrated that making sharing salient increased the likelihood of sharing about material purchases. As a consequence, consumers may gain as high levels of happiness from their objects

as from their experiences. The strategies businesses may use to motivate sharing appear endless and range from package messages, to consumer-to-consumer recommendation programs, to campaigns designed to encourage consumer communication in social media. Further research should be conducted to verify the effectiveness of such strategies.

These examples illustrate the instructive potential the present findings have to marketing professionals.

### **Implication to Marketing as a Discipline**

A less-than-perfect reputation has been attached to marketing for centuries. To be more precise, there are accounts of marketing's low reputation dating back to the sixteenth century. For example, in explaining that the temptations associated with the marketing occupation make marketers (or, as more appropriately put for the time, 'merchants') particularly susceptible to engaging in disreputable behavior, Mercado (1571) wrote, "Because of this opportunity the opportunity to sin the merchant's craft always had a bad reputation among learned men, whether they were Gentiles or Catholics." More recently, Bastos and Levy (2012, p. 360) echoed this view by claiming that, "The contemporary use of the notion of branding is equated with achieving and managing an identity and has in many contexts supplanted the word marketing, perhaps as a way of avoiding the more stigmatic aspects of the latter word." They attributed that state to "the sheer commercialism widely associated with the word "marketing"." Where does the present work fit in this scenario? I pose that, by investigating and proposing ways that marketing can genuinely improve consumers' lives, this work makes a small yet important contribution to marketing's image in the eyes of society.

## **Conclusion**

From early philosophers (e.g., Epicurus) to contemporary scholars (e.g., Matthias Mehl), many have called our attention to the power of conversation to increase happiness. This dissertation brings that discussion to the consumer arena and provides strong evidence that sharing (about our purchases) is highly beneficial. In light of the discussion in the previous paragraphs, however, it is unquestionable that a vast number of questions remain unanswered and that the future is likely to bring us many interesting works in this important area.

## **APPENDIX A: EXPERIMENT 1**

### **Experiment 1's Manipulation Instructions**

Condition 1 (Material Purchase): "Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. You kept the object for some time and may even still have it. It was an object that you could touch with your hand. You bought the object with the intention of advancing your happiness and enjoyment in life. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase."

Condition 2 (Experiential Purchase): "Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. In other words, you did not end up with anything tangible (anything you could hold in your hand) at the end of the experience except for your memories. You bought the experience with the intention of advancing your happiness and enjoyment in life. It turned out well and you did enjoy the purchase."

### **Experiment 1's Measures**

**Happiness (1 = not at all, 4 = moderately, 7 = very much)**

When you think about that purchase, how happy does it make you?

How much does this purchase contribute to your happiness in life?

**Sharing (1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 7 = Strongly agree)**

I would want to share the details of my object/experience.

I would feel hesitant to share with other people the details of my object/experience.

I would feel comfortable telling the details of that object/experience to someone.

I would feel excited about sharing the details of my object/experience.

**Expected Regard (1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 7 = Strongly agree)**

I think the person listening to me would regard me more highly after learning about my object/experience.



## **APPENDIX B: EXPERIMENT 2**

### **Experiment 2's Manipulation Instructions**

Condition 1 (Material—Solo): Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. You kept the object for some time and may even still have it. It was an object that you could touch with your hand. You used/consumed this object by yourself, not with anybody else.

Condition 2 (Material—Social): Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an object. You kept the object for some time and may even still have it. It was an object that you could touch with your hand. You used/consumed this object together with other people whom you knew or became acquainted with during the use/enjoyment of the object.

Condition 3 (Experiential—Solo): Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. In other words, you did not end up with anything tangible (anything you could hold in your hand) at the end of the experience except for your memories. You had that experience by yourself, not with anybody else.

Condition 4 (Experiential—Social): Please describe, in some detail, a time when you spent about \$50 on an experience. In other words, you did not end up with anything tangible (anything you could hold in your hand) at the end of the experience except for your memories. You had that experience together with other people whom you knew or became acquainted with during the use/enjoyment of the experience.

### **Experiment 2's Measures**

**Happiness (1 = not at all, 4 = moderately, 7 = very much)**

When you think about that purchase, how happy does it make you?

How much does this purchase contribute to your happiness in life?

**Sharing (1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 7 = Strongly agree)**

I would feel comfortable telling the details of that object/experience to someone.

I would feel excited about sharing the details of my object/experience.

**Listener's Enjoyment (1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 7 = Strongly agree)**

I think the person listening to me would enjoy doing so.

**Expected Regard (1 = Strongly disagree, 4 = Neutral, 7 = Strongly agree)**

I think the person listening to me would regard me more highly after learning about my object/experience.

## APPENDIX C: EXPERIMENT 3

### Experiment 3's Manipulation Instructions

Condition 1 (Material): In this study, we would like you to please recall a time when you bought a BBQ grill. You kept that object for some time and may still have it. In some detail, please describe that object.

Condition 2 (Experiential): In this study, we would like you to please recall a time when you bought a BBQ grill. You used it for some time and may still use it. In some detail, please describe the experience of using it.

### Experiment 3's Measures

**Sharing (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)**

I would feel excited about telling others about my grill.

I would want to talk to others about my grill.

How many people would you want to tell about that grill? (type that number in the box below).

Other than the people above that you considered telling about your grill, how many people did you actually talk about it before participating in this study? (please type the number below)

Besides the people above that you considered telling about your grill, how many other people do you think you will eventually talk about it? (please type the number below)

**Regard (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)**

I think the person listening to me would regard me more highly after learning about my grill.

**Happiness (1 = Not at all, 4 = Moderately, 7 = Very much)**

When you think about that grill, how happy does it make you?

How much does that grill contribute to your happiness in life?

#### **Easiness in Recalling Purchase**

Please indicate on the scale below, how easy or difficult you found the task of recalling the details of the grill you described in the first part of the study. Recalling the information I wrote was:

#### **Length of Ownership**

How long have you owned that grill? (please move the bar to indicate your answer)

#### **Purchase Cost**

As best as you can remember, how much did the grill cost? (please write the dollar amount below. Do not mention cents, only dollars. For example, if you paid one hundred and twenty-three dollars for it, please enter 123).

## **APPENDIX D: EXPERIMENT 4**

### **Experiment 4's Manipulation Instructions**

#### **Cuing Manipulations:**

**Cued Sharing:** In this first part of the study, we would like you to use the blank space below to write three sentences. In each sentence, you should include the two words designated for that specific sentence. Write as freely as you wish and use the two words in whatever sequence you want. Just make sure you use the two words suggested for each sentence. After you have created the three sentences, move on to the next part of the study.

Sentence 1 should contain the words:

Talk

Share

Sentence 2 should contain the words:

Communicate

Tell

Sentence 3 should contain the words:

Say

Disclose

**Cued Unrelated:** In this first part of the study, we would like you to use the blank space below to write three sentences. In each sentence, you should include the two words designated for that specific sentence. Write as freely as you wish and use the two words in whatever sequence you want. Just make sure you use the two words suggested for each sentence. After you have created the three sentences, move on to the next part of the study.

Sentence 1 should contain the words:

Grow

Cut

Sentence 2 should contain the words:

Lose

Find

Sentence 3 should contain the words:

Sleep

Leave

#### **Purchase Type Manipulation:**

**Material Purchase:** Now, we would like you to please think and write, in some detail, about an object that you intend to purchase some time in the future. In other words, write about a material purchase that you think about making. Such purchase is something tangible, something you can touch with your hand. When writing, please describe the object itself and what you imagine it will be like to have it.

**Experiential Purchase:** Now, we would like you to please think and write, in some detail, about an experience that you intend to purchase some time in the future. In other words, write about an

experiential purchase that you think about making. Such purchase is something you experience or live through, and that at the end of it all you are left with are your memories of it. When writing, please describe the experience itself and what you imagine it will be like to have it.

### **Experiment 4's Measures**

#### **Happiness (1 = Not at all, 4 = Moderately, 7 = Very much)**

When you think about that object/experience, how happy does it make you?

How much will that object/experience contribute to your happiness in life?

#### **Sharing (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)**

I would want to share with others the details of that object/experience.

I would feel excited about sharing the details of that object/experience.

How many people would you want to tell about that object/experience? (type that number in the box below).

Other than the people above that you considered telling about your object/experience, how many people have actually already told about that purchase before participating in this study (either online or in the real world)? (please type the number below)

#### **Regard (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)**

I think the person listening to me would regard me more highly after learning about that object/experience.

#### **Easiness in Recalling Purchase**

Please indicate on the scale below, how easy or difficult you found the task of recalling the details of the object/experience you described in the first part of the study. Recalling the information I wrote was:

#### **Number of Friends and Sharing Partners**

How many close friends would you say you have? (please enter the number in the space below)

With how many people (for example, friends, parents, intimate partner, strangers, etc.) do you often share aspects of your life?(please enter the number in the space below)

## **APPENDIX E: EXPERIMENT 5**

### **Experiment 5's Manipulation Instructions**

Welcome to the study on purchasing and happiness. Please read the instructions carefully, as your responses are very important to this research.

First, please think of two purchases that made you equally happy and cost about \$100 each.

One should be a material purchase (something tangible that you gained ownership over).

The other should be an experiential purchase (something that you experienced and at the end had nothing tangible except for your memories of it).

Write here, in some detail, the material purchase that you thought of

Write here, in some detail, the experiential purchase that you thought of

### **Experiment 5's Measures**

**Happiness (1 = Not at all, 4 = Moderately, 7 = Very much)**

How happy did it make you?

**Sharing (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)**

We sometimes tell people about our objects and experiences. With the descriptions of your object and experience in mind, please answer the following questions. Know that there are no right or wrong answers, we are simply interested in your honest answers. Please answer the questions attentively.

Before participating in this study, to how many people have you told about your object? (please enter the number of people in the space below. For example, if you have shared about your object with ten people, please enter the number 10)

Before participating in this study, to how many people have you told about your experience? (please enter the number of people in the space below. For example, if you have shared about your object with ten people, please enter the number 10)

Let's suppose you had the opportunity to tell a person about one (and only one) of the two purchases you wrote about, which one would you prefer to share about?

The object.

The experience.

## APPENDIX F: EXPERIMENT 6

### Experiment 6's Manipulation Instructions

Please read the instructions below attentively and follow them:

**Material Purchase:** Please think about an object that you acquired within the past 12 months and that cost about \$50. You kept the object for some time and may even still have it. It was an object that you could touch with your hand. You acquired the object with the intention of advancing your happiness and enjoyment in life. It turned out well and you enjoyed it. In a few words write down what the object was.

**Experiential Purchase:** Please think about an experience that you had within the past 12 months and that cost about \$50. In other words, you did not end up with anything tangible (anything you could hold in your hand) at the end of the experience except for your memories. You had the experience with the intention of advancing your happiness and enjoyment in life. It turned out well and you enjoyed it. In a few words write down what the experience was.

Put your answer on the line above.

### Experiment 6's Measures

**Happiness (1 = Not at all, 5/6 = Moderately, 10 = Very much)**

When you think about that purchase, how happy does it make you?

How much does this purchase contribute to your happiness in life?

**PANAS (1 = Very slightly or not at all, 5/6 = Moderately, 10 = Extremely)**

This scale consists of a number of words and phrases that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent it describes how **you are feeling right now**. Use the following scale to circle your answers:

Happy, Joyful, Confident, Delighted, Excited, Bold, Enthusiastic, Lively, Proud, Cheerful, Daring

**Sharing (1 = Not at all, 4 = Moderately, 7 = Very much)**

How much would you like to talk to other people (i.e., outside of this study) about that (topic shared)?

How much do you desire to tell other people about your (topic shared)?

If you had a chance to share about that purchase with other people, with how many other people would you like to share? (please write the number of people below)

When telling each person about that purchase, how long would you like to talk about it? (please enter the number of minutes in the space below. For example, if you would like the conversation to go for twelve minutes, please enter the number 12).

Before participating in this study, how many people did you actually tell about your (topic shared)? (please write the number of people below)

**Regard (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)**

I believe the other participant has a positive view of me after hearing about my (topic shared).

I believe the other participant regards me highly after learning about my (topic shared).

### **Topics about Experiment 6 that Demanded Deliberation and Decision-Making**

1) The first time I ran experiment 6 (herein, 6(1)), I gave participants five minutes to recall and write about the purchase. In study 6(2), we decided to limit that to a one-line writing. The reasons were:

a) The audio recording revealed that tellers thought five minutes was too long. They sometimes complained about it to the listener.

b) The long engagement in recalling and writing may constitute a form of sharing in itself. In turn, participants in the control condition (who shared about an unrelated topic) may have enjoyed the same benefits as those who actually shared about the purchase. The data from study 6(1) provided some indication that that may have happened. Specifically, participants in the experiential purchase-control condition reported high level of happiness.

2) The audio recordings revealed that a large portion of the sharing activity was taken by participants clarifying each other's role. In experiment 6(2) both participants knew well about the teller and listener's roles before engaging in sharing.

3) An issue of every study involving interpersonal communication is the dyadic data analysis problem, which originates from the violation of the assumption of independence of observations. The issue here is that there are effects coming from participant 1, from participant 2, and from the interaction between them. Statistically speaking, one may think of it as two main effects and an interaction effect. In other words, there are various sources of effects. To deal with this issue, some alternatives are available: a) the use of hierarchical linear modeling, b) the use of confederates who would play the role listeners and react similarly in all sharing activities, c) the teaching of participants to act as 'listener confederates', and d) the approach of allowing participants (i.e., listeners) to react normally in the sharing activity and of measuring the teller and the listener's evaluation of themselves and of each other. In the latter, these measures could be used as covariates and/or could allow us to see the effect of the listener's reaction (positive vs. negative) on the teller's happiness. Because I believe that the interaction, the bonding, and the feedback involved in sharing are important parts of the activity, I decided to use a mix of alternatives c) and d). Specifically, in study 6(2) we gave the listener some instructions but allow for some spontaneity to ensue. I, in turn, assessed both participants' evaluations of themselves and of each other with regards to sharing.

4) Related to the above issue, I had considered using two tellers. However, that would magnify the dyadic issue and would potentially create conflict between the two tellers. Specifically, teller 1's sharing would likely influence teller 2's. Moreover, comparison and envy could possibly

exist. In light of these considerations, I discarded the idea of two tellers and went back to the (cleaner) approach of using a teller and a listener.

5) In study 6(1), I allowed participants to share for however long they wished. The audio recordings indicated that having plenty of time may have led participants to often deviate the topic of the conversation from the purchase (or unrelated topic) to tangential topics. This, in turn, may have diluted the positive effect of sharing that I was expecting to find. For study 6(2), I decided to listen to the recordings of 6(1) and determine the duration of time participants usually share. With this knowledge, I then decided on the amount of time to establish for participants in 6(2) to share. At the end of that time, I gave participants a sound signal indicating that the sharing activity was over.

6) Professor Mehl suggested the pre- and post-sharing assessment of happiness. He also recommended the use of PANAS. The suggestions were adopted. The first has the potential of making my arguments stronger by showing the change in happiness within-subjects from before to after sharing. The second may serve as a) a control measure, or b) and additional, more general, assessment of happiness/positive emotion.

7) In study 6(1), participants sent me an email to let me know they were done with sharing. The research assistant, however, waited for five minutes to go remove participants from the room. The goal was to assess whether participants in the experiential purchase condition continued talking about the purchase more often than did those in the material purchase condition. However, except for a small number of participants, most participants did not continue talking about the purchase after they sent the email. Besides, the five-minute waiting time may just dilute the positive effect of sharing about the purchase. That is because many participants were disturbed by the waiting. Therefore, I decided to remove that part of the study.



## REFERENCES

- Altman, Irwin and Dalmas A. Taylor (1973), *Social Penetration: The Development of Interpersonal Relationships*, New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston.
- Amato, Paul R. and Alan Booth (1991), "Consequences of Parental Divorce and Marital Unhappiness for Adult Well-Being," *Social Forces*, 69(3), 895—914.
- Anderson, Cameron, Michael W. Kraus, Adam D. Galinsky, and Dacher Keltner (2012), "The Local-Ladder Effect Social Status and Subjective Well-Being," *Psychological Science*, 23 (7), 764—771.
- Andrews, Frank M. and Stephen Bassett Withey (1976), *Social Indicators of Well-Being*, New York: Plenum Press.
- Argo, Jennifer, Katherine White, and Darren W. Dahl (2006), "Social Comparison Theory and Deception in the Interpersonal Exchange of Consumption Information," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 33 (June), 99—108.
- Argyle, Michael (2003), *Causes and Correlates of Happiness*, In D. Kahneman, E. Diener, and N. Schwarz (Eds.), *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Argyle, Michael and Monika Henderson (1984), "The Rules of Friendship," *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 1, 211—237.
- Argyle, Michael and Lou Lu (1990), "The Happiness of Extraverts," *Personality and Individual Differences*, 11 (10), 1011—1017.
- Aron, Lewis (1991), "The Patient's Experience of the Analyst's Subjectivity," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, 1 (1), 29—51.

- Aron, Lewis (1997), "Self-Disclosure and the Interactive Matrix Commentary on Kenneth A. Frank's Paper," *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: The International Journal of Relational Perspectives*, 7 (3), 315—318.
- Bastos, Wilson and Sidney J. Levy (2012), "A History of the Concept of Branding: Practice and Theory," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, 4 (3), 347—368.
- Baumeister, Roy F. (1982), "A Self-Presentation View of Social Phenomena," *Psychological Bulletin*, 91 (1), 3—26.
- Belk, Russell W. (1988), "Possessions and the Extended Self," *Journal of Consumer research*, 15 (2), 139—168.
- Berger, Jonah, and Eva Buechel (2012), "Facebook Therapy? Why Do People Share Self-Relevant Content Online?." Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2013148> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2013148>.
- Berger, Jonah and Chip Heath (2007), "Where Consumers Diverge from Others: Identity Signaling and Product Domains," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (August), 121—134.
- Berger, Jonah A. and Iyengar Raghuram (2012), "How Interest Shapes Word-of-Mouth Over Different Channels," *working paper*.
- Berger, Jonah and Eric M. Schwartz (2011), "What Drives Immediate and Ongoing Word of Mouth?," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 48 (5), 869—880.
- Berinsky, Adam J., Gregory A. Huber, and Gabriel S. Lenz (2010), "Using Mechanical Turk as a Subject Recruitment Tool for Experimental Research," *Political Analysis*.

- Bless, H., Clore, G. L., Gossilano, V., Rabel, C., & Schwarz, N. (1996), "Mood and the Use of Scripts: Do Happy Moods Really Make People Mindless?," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71, 665—678.
- Blodgett, Jeffrey G. and Donald H. Granbois (1992), "Toward an Integrated Conceptual Model of Consumer Complaining Behavior," *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 5, 93—103.
- Bradburn, Norman M. (1969), *The Structure of Psychological Well-Being*, Chicago: Aldine.
- Brewer, Marilyn B. (1991), "The Social Self: On Being the Same and Different at the Same Time," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 17, 475-482.
- Brickman, Philip, Dan Coates, and Ronnie Janoff-Bulman (1978), "Lottery Winners and Accident Victims: Is Happiness Relative?," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 36 (August), 917-927.
- Brown, Michael F. (2008), "Who Owns What Spirits Share? Reflections on Commodification and Intellectual Property in New Age America," *Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, 17 (2), 7—18.
- Brysbaert, Marc, Boris New, and Emmanuel Keuleers (2012), "Adding Part-of-Speech Information to the SUBTLEX-US Word Frequencies," *Behavior Research Methods*, 44 (4) 991—997.
- Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, and Willard L. Rodgers (1976), *The Quality of American Life*, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Caprariello, Peter A. and Harry T. Reis (2013), "To Do, to Have, or to Share: The Value of Experiences over Material Possessions Depends on the Involvement of Others," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 104 (2), 199—215.

- Carter, Travis J. and Thomas Gilovich (2010), "The Relative Relativity of Material and Experiential Purchases," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98 (1), 146—159.
- Carter, Travis J. and Thomas Gilovich (2012), "I Am What I Do, Not What I Have: The Differential Centrality of Experiential and Material Purchases to the Self," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102 (6), 1304—1317.
- Carver, C. S. (2003), "Pleasure as a Sign you Can Attend to Something Else: Placing Positive Feelings within a General Model of Affect," *Cognition and Emotion*, 17 (2), 241—261.
- Chancellor, Joseph and Sonja Lyubomirsky (2011), "Happiness and Thrift: When (Spending) Less Is (Hedonically) More," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21 (2), 131—138.
- Chaplin, Lan Nguyen, Wilson Bastos, and Tina M. Lowrey (2010), "Happy Adolescents See the Good in People," *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 5 (5), 342—354.
- Chaudoir, Stephenie R. and Jeffrey D. Fisher (2010), "The Disclosure Processes Model: Understanding Disclosure Decision-Making and Post-Disclosure Outcomes Among People Living with a Concealable Stigmatized Identity," *Psychology Bulletin*, 136 (2), 236—256.
- Cialdini, Robert B., Richard J. Borden, Avril Thorne, Marcus Randall Walker, Stephen Freeman, and Lloyd Reynolds Sloan (1976), "Basking in Reflected Glory: Three (football) Field Studies," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 34 (3), 366—375.
- Collins, Nancy L. and Lynn Carol Miller (1994), "Self-Disclosure and Liking: A Meta-Analysis Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, 116 (3), 457—475.
- Corrigan, Patrick W. and Alicia K. Matthews (2003), "Stigma and Disclosure: Implications for Coming Out of the Closet," *Journal of Mental Health*, 12 (3), 235—248.

- Costa, Paul T. and Robert R. McCrae (1980), "Influence of Extraversion and Neuroticism on Subjective Well-Being: Happy and Unhappy People," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38 (4), 668—678.
- Cozby, Paul C. (1973), "Self-Disclosure: A Literature Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, 79 (2), 73—91.
- Crossley, Scott A., Max M. Louwerse, Philip M. McCarthy, and Danielle S. McNamara (2007), "A Linguistic Analysis of Simplified and Authentic Texts," *The Modern Language Journal*, 91 (1), 15—30.
- Cyders, Melissa E. and Gregory T. Smith (2008), "Emotion-Based Dispositions to Rash Action: Positive and Negative Urgency," *Psychological Bulletin*, 134 (6), 807—828.
- Day, Ralph L., and Laird Landon (1977), *Toward a Theory of Consumer Complaining Behavior*, in *Consumer and Industrial Buying Behavior*, Eds. Arch G. Woodside, Jagdish N. Sheth, and Petter D. Bennett. New York: North Holland, 425—437.
- De Angelis, Matteo, Andrea Bonezzi, Alessandro M. Peluso, Derek D. Rucker, Michele Costabile (2012), "On Braggarts and Gossips: A Self-Enhancement Account of Word-of-Mouth Generation and Transmission," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49 (4), 551—563.
- Derlega, Valerian J., Sandra Metts, Sandra Petronio, and Stephen T. Margulis (1993), *Self-Disclosure. Sage Series on Close Relationships*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Diener, Ed (1984), "Subjective Well-Being," *Psychological Bulletin*, 95 (3), 542—75.
- Diener, Ed and Carol Diener (1996), "Most People Are Happy," *Psychological Science*, 7 (3), 181—185.

- Diener, Ed and Shigehiro Oishi (2000), *Money and Happiness: Income and Subjective WellBeing Across Nations*, in Culture and Subjective Well-Being, Ed Diener and Eunkook M. Suh (Ed), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 185—218.
- Diener, Ed, Ed. Sandvik, and William Pavot (1991), *Happiness is the Frequency, not the Intensity, of Positive versus Negative Affect*, in Subjective Well-Being: An Interdisciplinary *Perspectiv*, F. Strack, M. Argyle, & N. Schwarz (Ed), Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 119—139.
- Diener, Ed, Ed Sandvik, William Pavot, and Frank Fujita (1992), “Extraversion and Subjective Well-Being in a U.S. National Probability Sample,” *Journal of Research in Personality*, 26 (3), 205-215.
- Diener, Ed, Jeffrey J. Sapyta, and Eunkook Suh (1998), “Subjective Well-Being is Essential to Well-Being,” *Psychological Inquiry*, 9 (1), 33—37.
- Diener Ed and Martin Seligman (2002), “Very Happy People,” *Psychological Science*, 13 (January), 81—84.
- Diener, Ed, Eunkook M. Suh, Richard E. Lucar, and Heidi L. Smith (1999), “Subjective Well-Being: Three Decades of Progress,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 125 (2), 276—302.
- Dimberg, Ulf (1988), “Facial Electromyography and the Experience of Emotion,” *Journal of Psychophysiology*, 2 (4), 277—282.
- Dunn, Elizabeth W., Lara B. Aknin, and Michael I. Norton (2008), “Spending Money on Others Promotes Happiness,” *Science*, 319 (5870), 1687—1688.
- Dunn, Elizabeth W., Daniel T. Gilbert, and Timothy D. Wilson (2011), “If Money Doesn’t Make You Happy, Then You Aren’t Spending It Right,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 21 (2), 115—125.

- Easterlin, Richard A. (1974), *Does Economic Growth Improve the Human Lot? Some Empirical Evidence*, in Nations and Households in Economic Growth, P.A. David and M.W. Reder, eds. New York: Academic Press.
- Elster, Jon and George Loewenstein (1992), *Utility from Memory and Anticipation*, in Choice over Time, G. Loewenstein & J. Elster (Ed.), New York: Russell Sage.
- Emmons, Robert A. (2004), *The Psychology of Gratitude*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Emmons, Robert A. and Michael E. McCullough (2003), “Counting Blessing versus Burdens: An Experimental Investigation of Gratitude and Subjective Well-Being in Daily Life,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84, 377—389.
- Engel, James F. and Roger D. Blackwell (1982), *Consumer Behavior*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Epstein, S. (1983), *The Unconscious, the Preconscious, and the Self-Concept*, in Psychological Perspectives on the Self, J. Suls and A. Greenwald (Ed.), Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum, 219—247.
- Evardson, Vo, Michael D. Johnson, Anders Gustafsson, and Tore Strandvik (2000), “The Effects of Satisfaction and Loyalty on Profits and Growth: Products versus Services,” *Total Quality Management*, 11 (7), 917—927.
- File, Karen Maru, Ben B. Judd, Russ Alan Prince (1992), “Interactive Marketing: The Influence of Participation on Positive Word-of-mouth and Referrals”, *Journal of Services Marketing*, 6 (4), 5—14.
- Finkenauer, Catrin and Bernand Rime (1998), “Socially Shared Emotional Experiences vs. Emotional Experiences Kept Secret: Differential Characteristics and Consequences,” *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 17 (3), 295—318.

- Fournier, Susan and David Mick (1999), "Rediscovering Satisfaction," *Journal of Marketing*, 63 (4), 5—23.
- Fournier, Susan and Marsha L. Richins (1991), "Some Theoretical and Popular Notions Concerning Materialism," *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 6 (6), 403—414.
- Fratraroli, Joanne (2006), "Experimental Disclosure and Its Moderators: A Meta-Analysis," *Psychological Bulletin*, 132 (6), 823—865.
- Fredrickson, Barbara L. (1998), "What Good Are Positive Emotions?," *Review of General Psychology*, 2 (3), 300—319.
- Fredrickson, Barbara L. Robert W. Levenson (1998), "Positive Emotions Speed Recovery from Cardiovascular Sequelae of Negative Emotion," *Cognition and Emotion*, 12(2), 191—220.
- Frey, Bruno S. and Alois Stutzer (2000), "Happiness Prospers in Democracy," *Journal of happiness Studies*, 1 (1), 79—102.
- Fromm, Erika (1978), "Primary and Secondary Process in Waking and in Altered States of Consciousness," *Journal of Altered States of Consciousness*, 3, 29—45.
- Gable, Shelly L., Gian C. Gonzaga, and Amy Strachman (2006), "Will You Be There for Me When Things Go Right? Supportive Responses to Positive Event Disclosures," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91(5), 904—917.
- Gable, Shelly L., Harry T. Reis, Emily A. Impett, and Evan R. Asher (2004), "What Do You Do When Things Go Right? The Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Benefits of Sharing Positive Events," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87 (2), 228—245.
- Glenn, Norval D. (1975), "The Contribution of Marriage to the Psychological Well-Being of Males and Females," *Journal of Marriage and Family Relations*, 37, 594—600.



- Goffman, Erving (1974), *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Gronroos, Christian (1990), *Service Management and Marketing: Managing the Moments of Truth in Service Competition*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.
- Haller, Max and Markus Hadler (2006), "How Social Relations and Structures Can Produce Happiness and Unhappiness: An International Comparative Analysis," *Social Indicators Research*, 75 (2), 169—216.
- Harrigan, John (2001), BrainyQuote, Retrieved from [http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/john\\_harrigan.html](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/j/john_harrigan.html)
- Hart, Stacey L., Lea Vella, and David C. Mohr (2008), "Relationships among Depressive Symptoms, Benefit-Finding, Optimism, and Positive Affect in Multiple Sclerosis Patients after Psychotherapy for Depression," *Health Psychology*, 27 (2), 230—238.
- Haybron, Daniel M. (2003), "What Do We Want from a Theory of Happiness?," *Metaphilosophy*, 34 (3), 305—329.
- Heilbroner, Robert L. (1956), *The Quest for Wealth: A Study of Acquisitive Man*, New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Hoffman, K. Douglas and John E. Bateson (1997), *Essentials of Services Marketing*, Fort Worth: Dryden Press.
- Homans, George C. (1958), "Social Behavior as Exchange," *Journal of American Sociology*, 63 (6), 597—606.
- Honeycutt, James M. (1987), "Intrapersonal Communication and Imagined Interactions," *Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association*, 73rd, Boston, MA, November 5—8.

- Howell, Ryan and Graham Hill (2009), “The Mediators of Experiential Purchases: Determining the Impact of Psychological Needs Satisfaction and Social Comparison,” *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 4 (6), 511—m 522.
- Hunt, H. Keith (1977), *CS/D-Overview and Future Research Direction*, in Conceptualization and Measurement of Consumer Satisfaction and Dissatisfaction, H. Keith Hunt, (Ed.) Cambridge, MA: Marketing Science Institute.
- Hunter, K.I. and Margaret W. Linn (1980), “Psychosocial Differences between Elderly Volunteers and Non-Volunteers,” *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 12 (3), 205—213.
- Johnson, Michael D. and Lars Nilsson (2000), “The Impact of Reliability and Customization on Customer Satisfaction for Goods versus Services,” Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Business School (Working Paper No. 00-027).
- Jourard, Sidney M. (1959), “Healthy Personality and Self-Disclosure,” *Mental Hygiene*, 43, 499—507.
- Kahneman, Daniel, Ed Diener, and Norbert Schwarz (1999), *Well-Being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology*, New York: Russell Sage Found.
- Katz, Elihu and Paul Lazarsfeld (1955), *Personal Influence*, Glencoe (IL): Free Press.
- Keinan, Anat and Ran Kivetz (2012), “Productivity Orientation and the Consumption of Collectable Experiences,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (6), 935—950.
- Kimmelmeier, Markus (2009), “Authoritarianism and Its Relationship with Intuitive-Experiential Cognitive Style and Heuristic Processing,” *Personality and Individual Differences*, 48 (1), 44—48.

- Kifer, Yona, Daniel Heller, Wei Qi Elaine Perunovic, and Adam D. Galinsky (2013), "The Good Life of the Powerful: The Experience of Power and Authenticity Enhances Subjective Well-Being," *Psychological Science*, 24 (3), 280—288.
- Kurtz , Jaime L. and Sonja Lyubomirsky (2008), *Towards a Durable Happiness*, in The Positive Psychology Perspective Series, Lopez SJ, Rettew JG, (Ed) Vol 4, West-port, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Langston, Christopher (1994), "Capitalizing On and Coping With Daily-Life Events: Expressive Responses to Positive Events," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67 (6), 1112—1125.
- Lee, Moonkyu (1993), "Perceived Variability and Prepurchase Evaluations of Goods versus Services," *The Journal of Marketing Management*, Fall/Winter, 17—24.
- Loewenstein, George and Shane Frederick (1999), *Hedonic Adaptation: From the Bright Side to the Dark Side*, in Well-being: The Foundations of Hedonic Psychology, D. Kahneman, E. Diener, and N. Schwarz (Ed), New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Lucas, Richard E., Ed Diener, Alexander Grob, Eunhook M. Suh, and Liang Shao (1998), "Cross-Cultural Evidence for the Fundamental Features of Extraversion: The Case against Sociability," *Manuscript Submitted for Publication*, University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign.
- Lykken, David and Auke Tellegen (1996), "Happiness Is a Stochastic Phenomenon," *Psychological Science*, 7 (3), 186—189.
- Lyubomirsky, Sonja, Laura King, and Ed Diener (2005), "The Benefits of Frequent Positive Affect: Does Happiness Lead to Success?," *Psychological bulletin*, 131 (6), 803—855.

- Lyubomirsky, Sonja and Heidi S. Lepper (1999), "A Measure of Subjective Happiness: Preliminary Reliability and Construct Validation," *Social Indicators Research*, 46 (2), 137—155.
- Lyubomirsky, Sonja, Kennon M. Sheldon, and David Schkade (2005), "Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change," *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111—131.
- Lyubomirsky, Sonja, C. Tkach, and J. Yelverton (2004), *Pursuing Sustained Happiness through Random Acts of Kindness and Counting One's Blessings: Tests of Two Six-Week Interventions*, Unpublished raw data. Results presented in: Lyubomirsky, S., Sheldon, K.M., and Schkade, D. (2005). Pursuing Happiness: The Architecture of Sustainable Change, *Review of General Psychology*, 9, 111—131.
- MacGregor, Jennifer C.D. and John G. Holmes (2011), "Rain on My Parade: Perceiving Low Self-Esteem in Close Others Hinders Positive Self-Disclosure," *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 2 (5), 523—530.
- Martin, Leslie R., Howard S. Friedman, Joan S. Tucker, Carol Tomlinson-Keasey, Michael H. Crikui, and Joseph E. Schwartz (2002). A Life Course Perspective on Childhood Cheerfulness and Its Relation to Mortality Risk," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28 (9), 1155—1165.
- Mather, Mara, Eldar Shafir, and Marcia K. Johnson (2000), "Misremembrance of options past: Source monitoring and choice," *Psychological Science*, 11 (2), 132-138.
- McCracken, Grant. (1988), *Culture and Consumption*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- McGue, Matt and Kaare Christensen (1997), "Genetic and Environmental Contributions to Depression Symptomatology: Evidence from Danish Twins 75 Years of Age and Older," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 106 (3), 439—448.

- Mehl, Matthias R., Simine Vazire, Shannon E. Holleran, and C. Shelby Clark (2010), "Eavesdropping on Happiness: Well-Being Is Related to Having Less Small Talk and More Substantive Conversations," *Psychological Science*, 21 (4), 539—541.
- Mercado, Thomas De (1571), *Suma De Tratos Y Contratos*, Seville, Spain: Henando Diaz.
- Midlarsky, Elizabeth (1991), *Helping as Coping*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Miller, Lynn C. and Stephen J. Read (1987), *Why Am I Telling You This?: Self-Disclosure in a Goal-Based Model of Personality*, in *Self-Disclosure: Theory, Research, and Therapy (Perspectives in Social Psychology)*, V.J. Derlega and J.H. Berg (Ed), New York: Plenum, 35—58.
- Moore, Sarah G. (2012), "Some Things Are Better Left Unsaid: How Word of Mouth Influences the Storyteller," *Journal of Consumer Research* 38 (6), 1140—1154.
- Mowen, John C., and Michael Minor (1998), *Consumer Behavior*, Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Murdock, Jr., Bennet B. (1962), "The Serial Position Effect of Free Recall," *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 64(5), 482—488.
- Myers, David G. (1992), *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who Is Happy—and Why?* New York: Morrow.
- Natale, Michael and Michael Hantas (1982), "Effect of Temporary Mood States on Selective Memory about the Self," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 42 (5), 927—934.
- Nawijn, Jeroen, Miquelle A. Marchand, Ruut Veenhoven, and Ad J. Vingerhoets (2010), "Vacationers Happier, but Most not Happier after a Holiday," *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 5 (1), 35—47.

- Nicolao, Leonardo, Julie R. Irwin, and Joseph K. Goodman (2009), "Happiness for Sale: Do Experiential Purchases Make Consumers Happier than Material Purchases?," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (August), 188—189.
- Nilsson, Lars, Michael D. Johnson, and Anders Gustafsson (2001), "The Impact of Quality Practices on Customer Satisfaction and Business Results: Product versus Service Organization," *Journal of Quality Management*, 6 (1), 5—27.
- Norris, Paul and Seymour Epstein (2011), "An Experiential Thinking Style: Its Facets and Relations with Objective and Subjective Criterion Measures," *Journal of Personality* 79 (5), 1044—1080.
- Nozick, Robert (1989), *The Examined Life. Philosophical Meditations*, New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Nunnally, Jum C. (1978), *Psychometric Theory*, New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Oliver, Richard L. (1977), "Effect of Expectation and Disconfirmation on Postexposure Product Evaluations: An Alternative Interpretation," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 62 (4), 480—486.
- Oliver, Richard L. (1980), "A Cognitive Model of the Antecedents and Consequences of Satisfaction Decisions," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 17 (4), 460—69.
- Olsson, Craig A., Rob McGee, Shyamala Nada-Raja, and Sheila M. Williams (2012), "A 32-Year Longitudinal Study of Child and Adolescent Pathways to Well-Being in Adulthood," *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 1—15.
- Omarzu, Julia (2000), "A Disclosure Decision Model: Determining How and When Individuals Will Self-Disclose," *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4 (2), 174—185.

- Ozcan, Kerimcan (2004), "Consumer-to-Consumer Interactions in a Networked Society: Word-of-Mouth Theory, Consumer Experiences, and Network Dynamics," *Doctoral Dissertation*, University of Michigan.
- Pavot, William, Ed Diener, and Frank Fujita (1990), "Extraversion and Happiness," *Personality and Individual Differences*, 11 (12), 1299—1306.
- Pelletier, Jillian (2009), "'Money Does Not Buy Happiness' Using the Sociological Imagination to Move Beyond Stressful Lives," *Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 7 (Summer), 173—180.
- Pennebaker James W. (1985), "Traumatic Experience and Psychosomatic Disease: Exploring the Roles of Behavioral Inhibition, Obsession, and Confiding," *Canadian Psychology*, 26 (2), 82—95.
- Petterson, John L. (1975), "Personality Effects of Self-Esteem, Need Motivation, and Locus of Control on the Life Satisfaction of Older Black Adults," *Doctoral Dissertation*, University of Michigan.
- Philosophy-Epicurus on Happiness (2007, December 29). A Guide to Happiness: Epicurus on Happiness. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20LTTRQcZ8c>
- Preacher, Kristopher J., Derek D. Rucker, and Andrew F. Hayes (2007), "Addressing Moderated Mediation Hypotheses: Theory, Methods, and Prescriptions," *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 42 (1), 185—227.
- Proulx, Christine M. and Linley A. Snyder-Rivas (2013), "The Longitudinal Associations Between Marital Happiness, Problems, and Self-Rated Health," *Journal of Family Psychology*, 27 (2), 194—202.
- Rathmell, John (1966), "What Is Meant by Services?," *Journal of Marketing*, 30 (4), 32—36.

- Redelmeier, Donald A., Joel Katz, and Daniel Kahneman (2003), "Memories of Colonoscopy: A Randomized Trial," *Pain*, 104 (1), 187—194.
- Reid, David W. and Michael Zeigler (1980), "Validity and Stability of a New Desired Control Measure Pertaining to Psychological Adjustment of the Elderly," *Journal of Gerontology*, 35 (3), 395—402.
- Reimann, Martin (2013), "Reward Substitution," *Doctoral Dissertation*, University of Southern California.
- Reschly, Amy L., E. Scott Huebner, James J. Appleton, and Susan Antaramian (2008), "Engagement as Flourishing: The Contribution of Positive Emotions and Coping to Adolescents' Engagement at School and with Learning," *Psychology in the Schools*, 45 (5), 419—431.
- Richins, Marsha L. (1987), *Media, Materialism, and Human Happiness*, in *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 14, ed. Melanie Wallendorf and Paul Anderson, Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Rime, Bernard, Catrin Finkenauer, Oliver Luminet, Emmanuelle Zech, and Pierre Philippot (1998), "Social Sharing of Emotion: New Evidence and New Questions," *European Review of Social Psychology*, 9 (1), 145—189.
- Rime, Bernard, and Dario Paez (2007), "Psychosocial Consequences of Sharing Emotions in Interpersonal Situations and in Collective Rituals. The Need to Express and Share Emotional Experiences," *Psicologia Sociale*, 1, 29—68.
- Roberts, John H. (2000), "Developing New Rules for New Markets," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 28 (1), 31—44.



- Rosenzweig, Emily and Thomas Gilovich (2012), “Buyer’s Remorse or Missed Opportunity? Differential Regrets for Material and Experiential Purchases,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 102 (2), 215—223.
- Rubin, Z. (1975), “Disclosing Oneself to a Stranger: Reciprocity and Its Limits,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 11 (3), 233—260.
- Russell, Cristel Antonia and Sidney J. Levy (2012), “The Temporal and Focal Dynamics of Volitional Reconsumption: A Phenomenological Investigation of Repeated Hedonic Experiences,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39 (2), 341—359.
- Rusting, Cheryl L. and Randy J. Larsen (1997), “Extraversion, Neuroticism, and Susceptibility to Positive and Negative Affect: A Test of Two Theoretical Models,” *Personality and Individual Differences*, 22 (5), 607—612.
- Ryan, Richard M. and Edward L. Deci (2001), “On Happiness and Human Potentials: A Review of Research on Hedonic and Eudaimonic Well-Being,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52 (1), 141—166.
- Ryff, Carol D. and Corey Lee M. Keyes (1995), “The Structure of Psychological Well-Being Revisited,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 69 (4), 719—727.
- Savitz, Eric (2011), “How Sharing Will Transform Online Advertising,” *Forbes Magazine*, September 13, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/ciocentral/2011/09/13/how-sharing-will-transform-online-advertising/>
- Scherr, Kyle C., Stephanie Madon, Max Gyll, Jennifer Willard, and Richard Spoth (2011), “Self-Verification as a Mediator of Mothers' Self-Fulfilling Effects on Adolescents' Educational Attainment,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37 (5), 587—600.

- Schroeder, Jonathan E. and Sanjiv S. Dugal (1995), "Psychological Correlates of the Materialism Construct," *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 10 (1), 243—253.
- Schwarz, Norbert (1990), *Feelings as Information: Informational and Motivational Functions of Affective States*, in *Handbook of Motivation and Cognition: Foundations of Social Behavior*, E. T. Higgins & R. M. Sorrentino (Ed), vol. 2, New York, NY: Guilford Press, 527—561.
- Seligman, Martin E.P., Tracy A. Steen, Nansook Park, and Christopher Peterson (2005), "Positive Psychology Progress: Empirical Validation Interventions," *American Psychologist*, 60 (5), 410—421.
- Silver, Roxane Lee (1982), "Coping with an Undesirable Life Event: A Study of Early Reactions to Physical Disability," *Doctoral Dissertation*, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL.
- Sirgy, M. Joseph (1982), "Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9 (3), 287—300.
- Sladek, Ruth M., Malcolm J. Bond, and Paddy A. Phillips (2010), "Age and Gender Differences in Preferences for Rational and Experiential Thinking," *Personality and Individual Differences*, 49 (8), 907—911.
- Solomon, Michael R. (1983), "The Role of Products as Social Stimuli: A Symbolic Interactionism Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10 (3), 319—329.
- Stephens, Nancy and Kevin P. Gwinner (1998), "Why Don't Some People Complain? A Cognitive-Emotive Process Model of Consumer Complaint Behavior," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 26 (3), 172—189.
- Strahilevitz, Michal and George Loewenstein (1998), "The Effect of Ownership History on the Valuation of Objects," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 25 (December), 276—289.

- Stroebe, Wolfgang, Margaret Stroebe, Georgios Abakounkin, and Henk Schut (1996), "The Role of Loneliness and Social Support in Adjustment to Loss: A Test of Attachment versus Stress Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70 (6), 1241—1249.
- Suh, Eunkook M. and Ed Diener (1999), "Self and the Use of Emotion Information: Joining Culture, Personality, and Situational Influences," *Manuscript Submitted for Publication*. University of California, Irvine.
- Swann Jr., William B. (1983), "Self-Verification: Bringing Social Reality into Harmony with the Self," *Psychological Perspectives on the Self*, 2, 33—66.
- Swan, John E., I. Frederick Trawick, and Maxwell G. Carroll (1981), "Effect of Participation in Marketing Research on Consumer Attitudes toward Research and Satisfaction with a Service," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18 (3), 356—363.
- Swann Jr., William B., Angel Gomez, D. Conor Seyle, J. Francisco Morales, and Carmen Huici (2009). "Identity Fusion: The Interplay of Personal and Social Identities in Extreme Group Behavior," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96 (5), 995—1011.
- Swann Jr., William B. and Stephen J. Read (1981), "Self-Verification Processes: How We Sustain our Self-Conceptions," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 17 (4), 351—372.
- Swann Jr., William B., Chris De La Ronde, And J. Gregory Hixon (1994), "Authenticity and Positivity Strivings in Marriage and Courtship," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 66 (5), 857—869.

- Tamir, Diana I. and Jason P. Mitchell (2012), “Disclosing Information about the Self Is Intrinsically Rewarding,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109 (21), 8038—8043.
- Tatzel, Miriam (2002), ““Money Worlds” and Well-Being: An Integration of Money Dispositions, Materialism and Price-Related Behavior,” *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 23 (1), 103—126.
- Taylor, Dalmis A., Irwin Altman, and Richard Sorrentino (1969), “Interpersonal Exchange as a Function of Rewards and Costs and Situational Factors: Expectancy Confirmation-Disconfirmation,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 5 (3), 324—339.
- Tellegen, Auke, David T. Lykken, Thomas J. Bouchard, Kimerly J. Wilcox, Nancy L. Segal, and Stephen Rich (1988), “Personality Similarity in Twins Reared Apart and Together,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54 (6), 1031—1039.
- Thaler, Richard H. (1980), “Toward a Positive Theory of Consumer Choice,” *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, 1(March), 39—60.
- Thoits, Peggy A. and Lyndi N. Hewitt (2001), “Volunteer Work and Well-Being,” *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, 42 (June), 115—131.
- Tian, Kelly Tepper, William O. Bearden, and Gary L. Hunter (2001), “Consumers’ Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28 (1), 50—66.
- Triandis, Harry Charalambos (1995), *Individualism & Collectivism. New Directions in Social Psychology*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

- Tugade, Michele M., and Barbara L. Fredrickson (2004), "Resilient Individuals Use Positive Emotions to Bounce Back from Negative Emotional Experiences," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 86 (2), 320—333.
- Van Boven, Leaf (2005), "Experientialism, Materialism, and the Pursuit of Happiness," *Review of General Psychology*, 9 (2), 132—142.
- Van Boven, Leaf, Margaret C. Campbell, and Thomas Gilovich (2010), "Stigmatizing Materialism: On Stereotypes and Impressions of Materialistic and Experiential Pursuits," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36 (4), 551—563.
- Van Boven, Leaf and Thomas Gilovich (2003), "To Do or to Have? This Is the Question," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85 (6), 1193—1202.
- Van Boven, Leaf and Thomas Gilovich (2004), "The Social Costs of Materialism," *Unpublished Manuscript*, University of Colorado Boulder.
- Vargo, Stephen L. and Lusch, Robert F. (2004a), "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing," *Journal of Marketing* 68 (January), 1—17.
- Vargo, Stephen L. and Robert F. Lusch (2004b), "The Four Service Marketing Myths: Remnants of a Goods-Based, Manufacturing Model," *Journal of Service Research*, 6 (4), 324—335.
- Vargo, Stephen and Robert F. Lusch (2008), "Service-Dominant Logic: Continuing the Evolution," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (1), 1—10.
- Vargo, Stephen L. and Fred W. Morgan (2005), "Services in Society and Academic Thought: An Historical Analysis," *Journal of Macromarketing*, 25 (1), 42—53.
- Veenhoven, Rutt (1993), *Happiness in Nations*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Risbo.
- Veenhoven, Rutt (1994), "Is Happiness a Trait? Tests of the Theory that a Better Society does not Make People any Happier," *Social Indicators Research*, 32 (2), 101—160.

- Veenhoven, Ruut (2008), "Effects of Happiness on Physical Health and the Consequences for Preventive Health Care," *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 9 (3), 449—469.
- Verduyn, Philippe, Iven Van Mechelen, and Francis Tuerlinckx (2011), "The Relation between Event Processing and the Duration of Emotional Experience," *Emotion*, 11 (1), 20—28.
- von Restorff, H. (1933), "Über die Wirkung von Bereichsbildungen im Spurenfeld," *Psychologische Forschung*, 18, 299—342.
- Walton, Stuart (2004), *A Natural History of Human Emotions*, New York: Grove Press.
- Waterman, Alan S. (1993), "Two Conceptions of Happiness: Contrasts of Personal Expressiveness (Eudaimonia) and Hedonic Enjoyment," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 64 (4), 678—691.
- Watson, David, Lee Anna Clark, and Auke Tellegen (1988), "Development and Validation of Brief Measures of Positive and Negative Affect," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54 (6), 1063—1070.
- Weinstein, Lawrence (1982), "Positive Contrast as due to Happiness," *Bulletin of the Psychonomic Society*, 19, 97—98.
- Wildschut, Tim, Constantine Sedikides, Jaime Arndt, and Clay Routledge (2006), "Nostalgia: Content, Triggers, Functions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 91 (5), 975—993.
- Wilson, Anne E. and Michael Ross (2001), "From Chump to Champ: People's Appraisals of Their Earlier and Current Selves," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 80 (4), 572—584.
- Wojnicki, Andrea C. and David Godes (2008), "Word-of-Mouth as Self-Enhancement," HBS *Marketing Research Paper*, No. 06-01, <http://ssrn.com/abstractp908999>.

- Wong, Nancy Y.C. (1997), "Suppose You Own the World and no One Knows? Conspicuous Consumption, Materialism, and Self," in *Advances in Consumer Research*, M. Brooks, and D. J. MacInnis (Ed), (Vol.24), Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.
- Worthy, M., Gary, A. L., and Kahn, G. M. (1969), "Self-Disclosure as an Exchange Process," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 13 (1), 59—63.
- Yi, Youjae (1989), "A Critical Review of Consumer Satisfaction," *Working Paper*, University of Michigan.
- Zauberman, Gal, Rebecca K. Ratner, and B. Kyu Kim (2009), "Memories as Assets: Strategic Memory Protection in Choice over Time," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (5), 715—728.
- Zhao, Xinshu, John G. Lynch, and Qimei Chen (2010), "Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: Myths and Truths about Mediation Analysis," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (2), 197—206.