



ASSOCIATION FOR CONSUMER RESEARCH

Labovitz School of Business & Economics, University of Minnesota Duluth, 11 E. Superior Street, Suite 210, Duluth, MN 55802

Changing the Script: Family Collectivity Formation in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Beth DuFault, University of Arizona, USA

Hope Schau, University of Arizona, USA

John Schouten, Aalto School of Business and Economics, Finland

This research shows that increasing parents' capacities to become part of the NICU assemblage appears to enhance family collectivity formation. In addition to the important work of improving parental coping, decision-making and bonding, this research can impact subsequent parental satisfaction with the neonatal unit servicescape and the hospital.

[to cite]:

Beth DuFault, Hope Schau, and John Schouten (2014) , "Changing the Script: Family Collectivity Formation in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit", in NA - Advances in Consumer Research Volume 42, eds. June Cotte and Stacy Wood, Duluth, MN : Association for Consumer Research, Pages: 177-183.

[url]:

<http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/1018004/volumes/v42/NA-42>

[copyright notice]:

This work is copyrighted by The Association for Consumer Research. For permission to copy or use this work in whole or in part, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center at <http://www.copyright.com/>.

Changing It Up: Consumers Transforming Their Lives

Chair: Hope Schau, University of Arizona, USA

Paper #1: Embracing A “Fresh Start”: How Consumers Engage To Change Their Lives

Ainslie Schultz, University of Arizona, Eller School of Management, USA

Linda L. Price, University of Arizona, Eller School of Management, USA

Robin Coulter, University of Connecticut, School of Business, USA

Paper #2: Consuming and Consumption in Third Space Communities: Constructing Sanctuary

James H. McAlexander, Oregon State University, School of Business, USA

Beth DuFault, University of Arizona, Eller School of Management, USA

Paper #3: Single Mothers By Choice: Putting Aside One Life Goal and Embracing Another

Sarita Ray Chaudhury, Humboldt State University, School of Business, USA

Pia A. Albinsson, Appalachian State University, Walker College of Business, USA

Paper #4: Changing the Script: Family Collectivity Formation in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Beth DuFault, University of Arizona, Eller School of Management, USA

John Schouten, Aalto School of Business and Economics, Finland

Hope Schau, University of Arizona, Eller School of Management, USA.

SESSION OVERVIEW

The objective of this session is to investigate how consumers embrace change in their lives. All four papers focus on processes of change, and describe the obstacles, emotions, and challenges of making changes. Much consumer research addresses the power of consumer habits and goal striving and how they affect consumer welfare (c.f. Verplanken and Wood 2006; Baumgartner and Pieters 2008). Research has also focused on understanding goal striving and persistence and how they are shaped by cultural discourses (Fisher, Otnes and Tuncay 2007). In addition, a variety of consumer research uncovers the important role of goal directed activities and goal persistence on wellbeing (for example, Fishbach and Dhar 2005; Seligman 2006). By contrast, our session focuses on the less commonly explored domain of whether and how consumers change directions and establish new goals and patterns of behavior and how this relates to a meaningful life (Feldman 2013; Mukhopadhyay and Johar 2005). Only a small amount of consumer research has focused on these processes of letting go and moving forward in a different direction (Schouten 1991; McAlexander 1991, Schau, Gilly and Wolfenbarger 2009). This is extremely important because persistent pursuit of personal goals is only part of healthy human adaptation (Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schulz and Carver 2003, Miller and C’De Baca 2001). When is it time to embrace change? How does this change unfold? How do consumers disengage from their past and their ideas of what would be, and engage with creating their new lives? Explicit in all four papers is an examination of the resolve to embrace a change that involves leaving something else behind—an important life goal, family and community, or a cultural narrative of

the birth of a new family member. The first paper explores consumers’ ideas of the construct “Fresh Start.” The second paper investigates goal disengagement and engagement with a new goal in the context of single mothers of choice. The third paper picks up on the themes of leaving things behind and engaging with a new community. The fourth explores how the shattering of a treasured imagined future eventually can lead to a new narrative being embraced across obstacles and constraints. All four papers speak to changes in consumption and consumer behavior patterns that accompany these changes, sometimes as small as making a novel choice of a snack item, as in study five reported in the first paper, to complete changes in consumption realms, as described in the second and third papers. Both the second and fourth paper also investigate how an evolving, hoped for family collective is shaped and constrained by surrounding technologies and service providers. We ask in multiple complex contexts: 1. How does goal disengagement and goal re-engagement shape consumer behavior? 2. What consumer behaviors do consumers employ to navigate the transition between changed life narratives?

Embracing A “Fresh Start”: How Consumers Engage to Change Their Lives

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

This paper introduces the construct, *fresh start*, which focuses on a consumer’s pursuit of new goals, accomplishing new things, and creating and making a new life. In other words, our research examines consumer engagement in “life” change (Andreasen, 1984; McAlexander, 1991; Schau, Gilly & Wolfenbarger, 2009; Silver, 1996), and is at contrast with much of the literature that focuses on goal adherence, progress and velocity with regard to a specific goal (e.g., changing eating habits, losing weight, or stopping smoking). We know that consumers do change, and when they change it can have dramatic consumption consequences (Schouten, 1991). Moreover, consumption is often profoundly implicated in what consumers seek to change, including for example, their health and budgeting (Soman & Cheema, 2004; Fishbach & Dhar, 2005; Oyserman, 2007). However, with few notable exceptions, we know little about life transformations. In this paper, we explore fresh start using five studies; Studies 1, 2 and 3 focus on the explication of the construct, measurement, and nomological net, and Studies 4 and 5 examine the ability to trigger behavior by priming individuals with the idea of a fresh start.

Study 1 (n=62) used a series of open-ended questions to gain insights into how consumers think about a fresh start. Findings indicate that “fresh start” resonates with consumers, and they understand it as starting anew and pursuing new life goals and experiences, as having a future-focus. Most respondents reflected on a fresh start as involving large, sweeping life changes, but others reported on focused goals, such as taking up a new exercise routine. With regard to desired fresh starts involving sweeping life changes, many noted the uncertainty of, as well as the difficulty and perhaps even impossibility linked to getting a fresh start. Hard work and commitment are paramount to getting a fresh start. Notably, our findings document that fresh starts are encumbered with emotions, efforts and obstacles.

Study 2, using insights from Study 1, was focused on scale development for our fresh start construct. Our online survey (n=178

adults; M-Turk) participants responded to 14 (7 point Likert-scale) items focused on getting a fresh start, as well as items designed to measure the related constructs of: optimism, future temporal focus, and psychological closure. Exploratory factor analysis (oblique rotation) results facilitated identification of four items (“I am creating a new life for myself,” “I am changing the way I live my life,” “I am pursuing new goals,” and “I am accomplishing new things”) with high internal consistency ($\alpha=.88$), and confirmatory factor analysis with these four items to measure fresh start demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity between fresh start and optimism, future temporal focus, and psychological closure.

Study 3, another online survey ($n=236$ adults; MTurk), further validates our four-item fresh start measure, extends the nomological network and advances a model of how consumers embrace a fresh start and how fresh starts translate into behavioral intentions. Our results indicate that fresh start (measured by our four items) is positively associated with engagement in new consumption choices generally, and desire to enact new behaviors, including live healthier lives and reduce spending. We find the relationship between fresh start and new consumption choices is moderated by goal reengagement, such that goal reengagement boosted the ability to enact new behaviors when getting a fresh start.

Study 4 considered the effects of priming individuals with the idea of a fresh start to assess impact of a fresh start (vs. not) relative to a recent failure on future performance. We used a 2 (fresh start, control) \times 2 (self-affirmation, no self-affirmation) between subjects design ($n=136$ undergraduate students). Participants first engaged in the five-minute Remote Associations Test (RAT; Mednick, 1968; Vohs et al., 2012), and upon completion received (false) feedback from the computer, saying they performed worse than average on this “intelligence” task. Participants in the fresh start condition read, “Start anew” and clicked to the next page; those in the control condition simply clicked to the next page. Next, participants received our second manipulation, with half affirmed by writing about their top-ranked value and half not affirmed by writing about their 7th ranked value (from Fein & Spencer, 1997). Participants again completed a five-minute RAT, and the number of correct items served as our “performance” dependent variable. Consistent with expectations, individuals primed with getting a fresh start (vs. control) performed significantly better on the second RAT ($b = 0.70$, $p < .05$; $R^2 = .04$), suggesting that engaging the idea of getting a fresh start may cause individuals to move past failure. We note no significant difference in performance between the self-affirmed and control group ($b = 0.70$, $p > .05$; $R^2 = .04$).

Study 5 also considered the effects of priming individuals with the idea of a fresh start to assess how thinking about a fresh start would affect the choice of a novel and familiar product. Seventy-five undergraduate students participated in the fresh start prime (vs. control) lab experiment. Participants were randomly assigned to the fresh start prime condition (and asked write a short statement about opening a door to the future following acceptance to the business college) or the control condition (and asked to write a short statement the about a movie they had seen recently). Participants responded to our four-item fresh start scale as a manipulation check, and then were asked to choose between two spreads (the novel almond butter and the familiar peanut butter) to eat with their crackers. Next, they complete the grit scale items (a measure of perseverance) and answered several demographic questions. As expected, for participants with stronger (vs. weaker) grit, we find a larger percentage (57%) of the individuals primed with a fresh start (vs. control; 29%) chose the novel almond butter ($\chi^2 = 1.35$, $p < .05$), suggesting that grittier people may hold stronger to experimenting with new future selves.

Taken together, our research systematically introduces the fresh start construct and offers a set of studies that establish a valid and internally consistent measure within a nomological network. Across our discussions and surveys of consumers we learned that for the majority embracing change through a Fresh Start, while difficult, is filled with desire and promise and connected to making better and new choices, leading to a better life. Our experiments suggest that we can empower consumers to get a fresh start and change behavior.

Consuming and Consumption in Third Space Communities: Constructing Sanctuary

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

We are beginning to better understand that experiences that are associated with identity transition can extend for many years, and may never be fully accomplished (cf. Arsel and Thompson 2011; Penaloza 1994; Ustuner and Holt 2007). Although transitions have been long postulated as a linear experience, the reality for consumers is that the lived experience of change may be much more complex than the accepted “model.” In recent work, we see that the experience of leaving a consumption-related community is, in some ways, like Dr. Dolittle’s pushmi-pullyu character. The attendant relationships can be integral to one’s life and severing these can be painful and protracted—and can last for months, years or even decades (McAlexander, DuFault, Martin and Schouten 2014; Vaughn 1986).

For the informants in the current study who are contemplating leaving or who have left an identity-central community, this exit process is preceded and accompanied by the acute awareness of a critical choice: “Do I leave to something, leave to nothing, or resign myself to staying?” This angst appears to undergird much of the decision of whether or not to leave. The majority of the informants in this study left to ‘something.’ This study examines the consumer behavior involved in the creation, consumption, and experiences of a new community of that ‘something.’ These consumers redirected the emotional and material resources they had previously poured into their former community, and used them to effectively buy membership (cf. Sana 2005) into third places. In these places, they co-construct a new something with other ex-members. In addition to consuming the new community, in eschewing the practices of their old community they substitute new brands and different consumption patterns. These new consumption patterns have been the preferred consumption selections of the new community and now become important and meaningful to their new consumer life. An entire consumption realm was lost and another one gained.

Feeling the need to find an alternative to their perception and fear of the feeling of impending nothingness upon leaving, the informants we observed and interviewed largely joined alternative communities composed partly or mostly of ex-members. Parents Without Partners, ex-Mormon conventions, and online ex-Harley owner forums are just a few examples of these kinds of third places for leavers of, respectively, marriages, faith, and brands. Unintentionally in the spirit of the conference topic “Back to Fun,” we found that third places for the leavers in our study include: perennially attending ex-community conferences and gatherings where “sin baskets” are given as raffle prizes; meeting at Starbucks for young atheist meetings to discuss newest transgressions of former faith tenants; weekly poker games that first began as “Drinking 101” upon initial exit; continuing to post on ex-faith member secret Facebook groups to give advice on meet-ups, dating and hook-ups for new defectors; starting transitions groups in other churches; joining a BMW enthusiasts’ club after using former tithing money to buy a BMW; and ritually attending sporting events, having family outings, or power-shopping on Sundays during

former church time. In short, much of what they have moved to is social, pleasurable, and/or fun.

Oldenburg (1989) describes traditional third places as neither work nor home, where people gather and find community. In the current research we report findings that show that these transitional third place communities play a very different role than that which has been postulated before in the consumer behavior literature. Extant literature suggests that leavers pass through these exit communities on their way out as they move toward a new identity (Schouten 1991). Those third places where people come together to establish new connections with others of similar “ex” status have been viewed as liminal and temporary (Turner 1969; McAlexander and Schouten 1989; Young and Wallendorf 1989; Ozanne 1992). However, we find that these liminal spaces, on the contrary, became an important and stable part of the ex-members’ transformation of their lives, not only in the initial exit stage, but throughout the exit process, and after they felt they had established their new identity. The consumption pattern changes also remained constant.

27 informants were depth interviewed on multiple occasions over a period of three years. A sub-sample of these informants and other community members were also observed and interviewed at gatherings for ex-members, ceremonial experiences, on secret online Facebook pages to which we were invited, and in various formal and informal groups specifically for ex-members of this community for two years. Our emergent findings show that these third places fill an under-reported and very important role for leavers that are far beyond the liminality of temporary community (cf Arnould and Price 1993). For leavers they can become a permanent and stable home, culturally and socially. Consequently these new consumption patterns, in addition to the resources spent on the new community, are lasting and can become as much a part of a leaver’s identity as the former community. In these third place communities consumers find both community and reinforcement and validation of their agency for change, giving them a feeling of collective strength to push back against family, cultural and social resistance. They also give leavers a comfortable community with other members of the same frame of reference in regard to the community they have left. These new communities, far from being ephemerally liminal, appear stable, and continue to impact consumption choice and consumer behavior in a lasting relationship. They contribute to the leavers’ well-being as they make the transition from faithful community member, to the individual they envision who has volition, agency and strength to make independent choices.

Single Mothers By Choice: Putting Aside One Life Goal and Embracing Another

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Consumer well-being research has emphasized the adaptive role of being optimistic, believing in one’s abilities and persisting in the pursuit of important life goals (Seligman 2006). However, people can’t always attain their goals and hence an equally important adaptive human process that can contribute to subjective wellbeing and health is the ability to disengage from unattainable goals and re-engage with new meaningful goals (Wrosch, Scheier, Miller, Schulz and Carver 2003; Wrosch, Miller, Scheier and Brun de Pontet 2007). Examining the adaptive process of giving up and moving on has received virtually no attention in consumer research, although it likely has applications in numerous domains from diet and exercise to procreation strategies (Fischer, Otnes and Tuncay 2007). When is it time to give up, and do something different? How do people reorganize their lives to pursue a different life goal? To date, we

know almost nothing about the process through which consumers move from a persistent engagement with one important life goal to reorganizing their lives, resources, networks and market behaviors to engage with pursuit of a different goal.

The purpose of this research is to uncover that process in the context of Single Mothers by Choice. An estimated 30,000 American babies are born with the help of donor sperm each year and close to 50 percent of human sperm and eggs are purchased by single women (Hundhausen 2010). Recent research suggests that for many heterosexual women this involves a process of giving up on finding a partner and shifting resources and attention to making a baby (Hertz 2006; Graham 2012). However, research has not uncovered this process or how women shift goals and mobilize networks, markets, resources and myriad behaviors from dating to procreation. This paper presents the findings from a two-phase study. Phase one is a netnographic discourse analysis of posts and blogs from select online communities of self-identified SMCs (Single Mothers by Choice) and phase two is based on depth interviews with 19 heterosexual SMCs about their disengagement from what to many of them seems the unattainable goal of finding a partner and father for their children to engaging the goal of motherhood through donor sperm (Assisted reproductive technologies—ART). In addition, we included interviews with five women who were expanding their family from one child (either born naturally or through ART) to two in order to better understand how the ideal of the nuclear family is re-negotiated and extended over time and to compare differences in process. In order to establish boundary conditions, we also sought negative cases of women who wavered and decided not to pursue ART. The data was analyzed independently through iterative readings by the two authors and emergent themes were compared and contrasted. Discrepancies were either resolved through discussion or additional data collected until a clearer picture evolved through further interpretive analysis.

Our findings illustrate how women transition their resources, networks and consumption domains as they let go of one goal and embrace another. Our informants find emotional difficulty in this transition—for many it feels like ‘giving up on love.’ There is also physical pain and exhaustion; the in vitro fertilization process can be grueling. On the other hand, they also describe exhilaration and joy on realizing their freedom as they embark on this new path, free of the expectations of finding a mate and empowered to take control of their own reproduction. The liminality of moving between these goals has been described in prior research (Graham 2012; Hertz 2006), however, by focusing on how the two processes of disengagement and re-engagement interplay we counter prior descriptions of liminality and theoretically inform the significant differences we find among our informants in their experience of motherhood and how they imagine their futures. For example, while the process of disengagement is sometimes demarked by the liminal process described in prior research that then leads to embracing this new goal, many of our women have a tighter and more iterative interplay and move back and forth, pursuing both goals simultaneously or sequentially (cf McAlexander, Martin, DuFault, Schouten 2014). This relative inability to successfully let go of one goal and fully engage with the pursuit of motherhood can contribute to stress and ambivalence about this new lifestyle choice and goal (Otnes, Lowry and Shrum 1997). A post on the SMC board illustrates this ubiquitous ambivalence:

When I decided to become a single mother, I had to deal with society’s notions of the perfect family, and the fact that I was choosing to have a child in a way that was not ‘ideal’ or ‘normal’ by today’s standards. I had to grieve

that I did not have the white picket fence and the husband rubbing my belly while it grew with our child inside, a child we got to make the fun way. I got mad and sad that this ideal was not for me and that I had to do it differently because somehow I was not good enough for the norm. (Changes, 2014)

Our informant data in this study greatly enriches and gives depth to many aspects of this choice, including the time of birth. Most importantly, it adds to the literature by addressing more fully the resources and consumption constellation changes that are resultant from this goal disengagement. Moreover, because the move from the traditional nuclear family choice to Single Mother by Choice is fraught with stigma and structural hurdles, engagement with this new goal is full of obstacles. While this is certainly not unique to this context, and would be applicable to other consumer changes (Schouten 2014; Ruvio and Belk 2013), it adds a significant hurdle to re-engaging with the prior goal. Further, our informant data reinforces the nascent findings of other consumer behavior researchers about the iterative non-linear nature of exit transitions (Arsel and Thompson 2011; McAlexander, Martin, DuFault, Schouten 2014); Penaloza 1994; Schau and Russell 2014; Ustuner and Holt 2007).

Changing the Script: Family Collectivity Formation in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous vacation trip - to Italy...It's all very exciting. After months of eager anticipation, the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go....The stewardess comes in and says, "Welcome to Holland." "Holland?!?" you say. "What do you mean Holland? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. (From "Welcome to Holland" by Emily Perl Kingsley-given to many new NICU parents)

The time of birth is a momentous change, surrounded with cultural scripts and logics that have been created and ingrained over generations by family lore, personal experience, entertainment tropes, advertising, marketing, and media hype of celebrity and royal births. Many expectant parents prepare for the new baby with common consumer behaviors: acquiring baby clothes and infant paraphernalia, making birthing plans, preparing the nursery. Parents imagine themselves holding their newborn, bringing their new baby home in accordance with the traditional narrative.

But some babies do not follow this script, and parents' imagined narrative of birth and baby is shattered as it hits the neonatal intensive care unit doors of an unexpected reality. They arrive at the bedside of the tiny human to whom they've just given birth, separated by the enclosed box of glass that is the warming isolette. Ropes of tubing and lines attach their baby to life-giving air and nutrients, hooking them to machines that randomly cry alarm. The family has arrived in Holland, not Italy. As one staff member told us:

It's like they need a guidebook: "This is our land. These are our laws. These are our customs. These are our rules. This is what's around here... You can be an active participant in this land by knowing this and learning that and speaking this language." (Sandy, NICU caregiver)

Listening to parents talk about this time of acclimation is much like watching Bill Murray in "Lost in Translation" as he navigates Tokyo without knowing Japanese, staring at flashing billboards and listening to conversations and sounds that have no meaning to him. Parents describe a sound track that falls like the noises of a foreign country's streets on uncomprehending ears: medical acronyms, beeping, chiming, flashing cacophony of alarms, overhead pages, the hiss of ventilators. How do parents create a new script to form their family collectivity?

For background, we draw upon a body of work in the nursing and medical literature about the family and sounds in the NICU (Seideman et al. 1997, Stromsweld and Ward 1997, Board 2004, Fisher et al. 2008, Pineda et al. 2013, Lahav 2014). The importance of teamwork between staff and parents has been shown to improve parent feelings of comfort (Brandon et al 2009). In the consumer behavior literature, notable works have been written about difficult decision making and end-of-life in neonatal and pediatric intensive care units (Botti, Orfali, & Iyengar 2009; Orfali and Gordon 2004; Luce, Bettman and Payne 2001). But there is still a large lacuna in our consumer behavior literature about the much more common parental hospital service scape experience of a shorter NICU stay and a happier outcome. There is similarly a lack of research into the active role that equipment has upon the family collectivity formation (Dent 2003, Agrawal et al 2009). Our research works to fill this gap. We investigate how an evolving, hoped-for family collective is shaped and constrained by unexpected events, surrounding technologies, discourses and service providers, and how the new family collective assembles, bonds and moves forward. We employ a methodological lens of assemblage and actor network theory (Latour 2005, DeLanda 2006, Deleuze and Guattari 1987, Epp and Price 2010, Epp et al. 2011, Martin and Schouten 2013) that has been used in medical contexts (Berg and Timmermans 2000; Brown and Middleton 2005). Both parents and staff describe the unit in emic language that reveals its assemblage qualities and the equipment as actors:

You don't think of it as equipment. The equipment is extensions of the child—like you think of the ventilator as the lungs of the baby outside the baby, and the tubing is just its extended trachea. (Sam, NICU caregiver)

Parents can feel as if they are intruding on the baby/staff/unit assemblage. As one informant described:

They couldn't go home until they <her twins> could "kangaroo." They literally had to spend 30 minutes trying to get them to lie right on top of me and rearrange the tubes so that the alarms wouldn't go crazy. I kept thinking, "It's me, it's my body that's wrong. They need to do this without me here." (Marianne, mother)

Using depth interviews of parents and NICU staff, observations, and netnography on NICU forums, we triangulate our findings to show that parents who increase their capacities to become part of this NICU assemblage appear to increase their feelings of empowerment over their baby's care. It appears that this is a vital component of effectively bonding as a family collectivity. Parents describe feelings of competence and pride as they increase their capacities by learning the language and mastering use of the machinery (cf Muething 2007). As one mother told us:

Finally it got to the point where I could understand the language. It was like learning French. Desats, bradycardia,

tachycardia, A's and B's...Then I could be there for rounds and participate. I was part of the team.

Parents also reveal this enhances their ability to cope. Coping further improves family bonding and leads to better decision making (Melnyk et al 2006; Wrosch et al. 2011; Robbins et al 2013). In addition to the important work of improving parent/infant bonding, this research has the potential to make an impact upon consequent parental satisfaction with the neonatal unit service scape and the hospital itself (cf Popper et al 1987, Mitchell-DiCenso et al 1996, Cescutti-Butler and Galvin 2003, Conway et al 2006).

A growing body of work suggests that there are genuine benefits to purchasing experiences, intangible purchases such as vacations and concerts, instead of purchasing material possessions, tangible goods such as clothes, trinkets, and electronics (Carter & Gilovich, 2010, 2012; Howell, Pchelin, & Iyer, in press; Nicolao, Irwin, & Goodman, 2009; Rosenzweig & Gilovich, 2011; Van Boven & Gilovich, 2003). Experiences, compared with possessions, appear to be ultimately more satisfying because they are less likely to suffer from invidious comparisons to unchosen options or new information (Carter & Gilovich, 2010), and are more central to one's self-concept (Carter & Gilovich, 2012). What's more, the general tendency to choose experiences over possessions is associated with well-being and life satisfaction (Howell et al., in press). However, as all of this work acknowledges, the categories are not very clearly defined. What makes an experience an experience? What makes a possession a possession? While there are certainly purchases that are clearly experiential (e.g. concerts) or material (e.g. clothes), there are also quite a few that cannot be so easily categorized. An mp3 player is a tangible object, but it also allows one to enjoy the experience of listening to music. How do these ambiguous purchases fit into the overall pattern of findings? What's more, what does such ambiguity say about the underlying properties that define the categories?

To start, we endeavored to examine the types of purchases that participants generated when prompted to recall a material or an experiential purchase. In Study 1, we found that independent raters were easily able to guess, based on the description provided by the participant, which type of purchase they had been assigned to recall. This suggests that, regardless of any fuzziness in the categories, most participants seemed to have little trouble using them. There were some purchases, however, that fell somewhere in the middle, and also appeared to be somewhat middling in terms of their satisfaction. Would it be possible to take advantage of that ambiguity, to take those same purchases and emphasize aspects of one category or the other, to produce the same psychological effects?

In Study 2, we again had participants recall either a material or an experiential purchase, and again found that participants in the experiential condition were more satisfied with their purchases. However, we also asked a third group of participants to recall a material purchase, but we asked them to take a moment to think about its experiential qualities. As expected, we found that this group was just as satisfied as participants in the experiential condition. While the previous study suggested that there are real differences between the categories, this finding indicates that there is a certain amount of latitude in how one thinks about a given purchase.

In the next three studies, we examined that very latitude. We took the same purchase, one that was smack in the middle of that fuzzy boundary between the two types of purchases, and emphasized either its material or its experiential qualities. Participants in Study 3 were asked to think about a boxed set of music either as part of a music collection, something one puts on a shelf, or as an experience, something one listens to. Participants who had been led to think

of it as an experience were less bothered by negative comparative information (learning it was now available for a lower price), and thought it would be more satisfying than participants who framed it as a possession.

In Study 4, participants were asked to think about a new 3-D TV as either a possession, emphasizing where it would go in their home and fit in with their other possessions, or as an experience, emphasizing experiencing television in a whole new way and how it would fit with their other activities. We then showed participants several sets of overlapping circles, as in the Inclusion of the Other in the Self scale (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992), and asked them to choose which matched how much they thought the TV would be a part of their self-concept. As predicted, participants in the experiential framing condition chose circles that overlapped to a greater degree, thinking that the more experiential television would be more closely associated with their self-concept.

In Study 5, we looked at the flip side of satisfaction: regret. People tend to feel regrets of inaction about their experiences (i.e. missed opportunities) and regrets of action about their possessions (i.e. buyer's remorse). Would framing a purchase as an experience or possession produce similar patterns of regret? When a 3-D TV was described as an experience, participants felt that the regret of a missed opportunity would be stronger than the regret of buyer's remorse, but not when it was framed as a possession.

It's worth noting that reframing ambiguity may be asymmetric. That is, it may be fairly easy to think of a tangible object in terms of the experiences it affords, but rather difficult, if not impossible, to think about an intangible experience in terms of its material qualities. Fortunately, turning possessions into experiences appears to be the reframing that is most psychologically beneficial.

These studies taken together suggest the differences between the categories appear to have something to do with real, tangible differences between possessions and experiences, but also with certain psychological processes, such as comparison and regret, and perhaps it is those psychological processes that underlie what makes an experience an experience. What's more, the ambiguity in category definitions can actually be taken advantage of – producing greater satisfaction and reduced susceptibility to negative comparative information. In sum, although it's possible that the categories are largely in the mind, it may be the mind that matters.

REFERENCES

- Agrawal, Nidhi, Geeta Menon and Jennifer L. Aaker (2007), "Getting Emotional about Health," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 44 (1), 100-113.
- Andreasen, Alan R. (1984), "Life Status Changes and Changes in Consumer Preferences and Satisfaction," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 11 (3), 784-794.
- Arnould, Eric J. and Linda L. Price (1993), "River Magic: Extraordinary Experience and the Extended Service Encounter," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (1), 24.
- Arsel, Zeynep and Craig J. Thompson (2011), "Demythologizing Consumption Practices: How Consumers Protect their Field-Dependent Identity Investments from Devaluing Marketplace Myths," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 37 (5), 791-806.
- Baumgartner, Hans, Rik Pieters, and Richard P. Bagozzi (2008), "Future-Oriented Emotions: Conceptualization and Behavior Effects," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38 (4), 685-696.
- Berg, Marc and Stefan Timmermans (2000), *Orders and Their Others: On the Constitution of Universalities in Medical Work, Configurations*, (8) 1, 31-61, Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Board, Rhonda (2004), "Father Stress During a Child's Critical Care Hospitalization," *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*, 18 (5), 244-249.
- Botti, Simona, Kristina Orfali, and Sheena S. Iyengar (2009), "Tragic Choices: Autonomy and Emotional Responses to Medical Decisions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (3), 337-352.
- Brandon, Gwienevera D., Susan Adeniyi-Jones, Sharon Kirkby, David Webb, Jennifer F. Culhane, and Jay S. Greenspan (2009), "Are Outcomes and Care Processes for Preterm Neonates Influenced by Health Insurance Status?" *Pediatrics*, 124 (1), 122-127.
- Brown, Steven D. and David Middleton (2005), "The Naby as Virtual Object: Agency and Difference in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, (23) 695-71
- Byrne, Steve, Steve Fisher, Peter-Marc Fortune, Cassie Lawn, and Sue Wieteska (2008), "Paediatric and Neonatal Safe Transfer and Retrieval," *The Practical Approach*.
- Cescutti-Butler, Luisa and Kathleen Galvin (2003), "Parents' Perceptions of Staff Competency in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit," *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 12 (5), 752-761.
- "Changes." [Web blog post]. (2014, February 1). Retrieved February 7, 2014, from Single Mothers by Choice, Ed. Jane Mattes, L.C.S.W. at <https://www.singlemothersbychoice.org/2014/02/01/changes-2/>
- Conway, Jim, Bev Johnson, Susan Edgman-Levitan, Juliette Schlucter, Dan Ford, Pat Sodomka, and Laurel Simmons (2006), "Partnering with Patients and Families to Design a Patient-and Family-Centered Health Care System: A Roadmap for the Future," A work in progress, Bethesda, MD: Institute for Family-Centered Care.
- DeLanda, Manuel (2006), "A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity," Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari (1987), "A Thousand Plateaus, trans."
- Dent, Mike (2003), "Managing Doctors and Saving a Hospital: Irony, Rhetoric and Actor Networks," *Organization*, 10 (1), 107-127.
- Epp, Amber. M. and Linda L. Price (2010), "The Storied Life of Singularized Objects: Forces of Agency and Network Transformation," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (5), 820-837.
- Fein, Steven and Steven J. Spencer (1997), "Prejudice as Self-Image Maintenance: Affirming the Self Through Derogating Others," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 73 (1), 31.
- Feldman, Jackie (2013), *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity*. Berghahn Bo
- Fischer, Eileen, Cele C. Otnes, and Linda Tuncay (2007), "Pursuing Parenthood: Integrating Cultural and Cognitive Perspectives on Persistent Goal Striving," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (4), 425-440
- Fishbach, Ayelet and Ravi Dhar (2005), "Goals as Excuses or Guides: The Liberating Effect of Perceived Goal Progress on Choice," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (3), 370-377.
- Graham, Darlene (2012), *Enchanting Baby* (Vol. 1152). Harlequin.
- Hertz, Rosanna (2006), "Stories as evidence," *Qualitative Sociology*, 29 (4), 539-543.
- Hundhausen, Anne K. (2010), *Single Choice: Many Lives*. United States.
- Kingsley, Emily P. (1987), "Welcome to Holland." Essay.
- Latour, Jos M. (2005), "Is Family-Centred Care in Critical Care Units that Difficult? A View from Europe," *Nursing in Critical Care*, 10 (2), 51-53.
- Lofting, Hugh (1920), *The Story of Doctor Dolittle: Being the History of His Peculiar Life at Home, and Astonishing Adventures in Foreign Parts*, Dover Press.
- Luce, Mary F., James Bettman, and John Payne (2001), "Emotional Decisions: Tradeoff Difficulties and Coping in Consumer Choice," *Monographs of the Journal of Consumer Research*, University of Chicago Press.
- Martin, Diane M. and John W. Schouten (2013), "Sustainable Marketing through the Natural Step," *Humanistic Marketing*, 231.
- McAlexander, James H. (1991), "Divorce, the Disposition of the Relationship, and Everything," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 18 (1), 43-48.
- McAlexander, James H. and John W. Schouten (1989), "Hair Style Changes as Transition Markers," *Sociology and Social Research*, 74 (1), 58-62.
- McAlexander, James H., Beth L. Dufault, Diane M. Martin, and John W. Schouten (2014), "The Marketization of Religion: Field, Capital, and Consumer Identity," *Journal of Consumer Research*, forthcoming.
- Mednick, Sarnoff A. (1968), "The Remote Associates Test*," *The Journal of Creative Behavior*, 2 (3), 213-214.
- Melnyk, Bernadette M., Nancy F. Feinstein, Linda Alpert-Gillis, Eileen Fairbanks, Hugh F. Crean, Robert A. Sinkin, Patricia W. Stone, Leigh Small, Xin Tu, and Steven J. Gross (2006), "Reducing Premature Infants' Length of Stay and Improving Parents' Mental Health Outcomes with the Creating Opportunities for Parent Empowerment (COPE) Neonatal Intensive Care Unit Program: A Randomized, Controlled Trial," *Pediatrics*, 118 (5), 1414-1427.
- Miller, William R. and Janet C'de Baca (2001), *Quantum Change: When Epiphanies and Sudden Insights Transform Lives*, Guilford Press.
- Mitchell-DiCenso, Alba, Gordon Guyatt, Bosco Paes, Susan Blatz, Haresh Kirpalani, Marla Fryers, ... and Doris Southwell (1996), "A New Measure of Parent Satisfaction with Medical Care Provided in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit," *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 49 (3), 313-318.
- Muething, Stephen E., Uma R. Kotagal, Pamela Schoettker, Javier G. del Rey, and Thomas G. DeWitt (2007), "Family-Centered Bedside Rounds: A New Approach to Patient Care and Teaching," *Pediatrics*, 119 (4), 829-832.
- Mukhopadhyay, Anirban and Gita V. Johar (2005), "Where There Is a Will, Is There a Way? Effects of Lay Theories of Self-Control on Setting and Keeping Resolutions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (4), 779-786.
- Oldenburg, Ray (1989), *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlours, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You Through the Day*. New York: Paragon House.
- Orfali, Kristina and Elisa Gordon (2004), "Autonomy Gone Awry: A Cross-Cultural Study of Parents' Experiences in Neonatal Intensive Care Units," *Theoretical Medicine and Bioethics*, 25 (4), 329-365.

- Otnes, Cele, Tina M. Lowrey, and L. J. Shrum (1997), "Toward an Understanding of Consumer Ambivalence," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (1), 80-93.
- Oyserman, Daphna (2007), "Social Identity and Self-Regulation," In *Social Psychology: Handbook of Basic Principles*.
- Ozanne, Julie L. (1992), "The Role of Consumption and Disposition during Classic Rites of Passage: The Journey of Birth, Initiation, and Death," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 19, 396-403.
- Peñaloza, Lisa (1994), "Atravesando Fronteras/Border Crossings: A Critical Ethnographic Exploration of the Consumer Acculturation of Mexican Immigrants," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 21 (1), 32-54.
- Pineda, Roberta G., Tiong H. Tjoeng, Claudine Vavasseur, Hiroyuki Kidokoro, Jeffrey J. Neil, and Terrie Inder (2013), "Patterns of Altered Neurobehavior in Preterm Infants within the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit," *The Journal of Pediatrics*, 162 (3), 470-476.
- Popper, Barbara, Becky Anderson, Anne Black, Elizabeth Ericson, and David Peck (1987), "A Case Study of the Impact of a Parent Advisory Committee on Hospital Design and Policy, Boston's Children's Hospital," *Children's Environments Quarterly*, 12-17.
- Robbins, Megan L., Matthias R. Mehl, Hillary L. Smith, and Karen L. Weihs (2013), "Linguistic Indicators of Patient, Couple, and Family Adjustment Following Breast Cancer," *Psycho-Oncology*, 22 (7), 1501-1508.
- Ruvio, Ayalla and Russell W. Belk, (Eds.), (2013), *The Routledge Companion to Identity and Consumption*, Routledge.
- Sana, Mariano (2005), "Buying Membership in the Transnational Community: Migrant Remittances, Social Status, and Assimilation," *Population Research and Policy Review*, (24), 231-261.
- Schau, Hope J., Mary C. Gilly, and Mary Wolfinbarger (2009), "Consumer Identity Renaissance: The Resurgence of Identity-Inspired Consumption in Retirement," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (2), 255-276.
- Schouten, John W. (1991), "Selves in Transition: Symbolic Consumption in Personal Rites of Passage and Identity Reconstruction," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36 (2), 412-425.
- Seideman, Ruth Y., Margaret A. Watson, Karen E. Corff, Phillip Odle, Joan Haase, and Jane L. Bowerman (1997), "Parent Stress and Coping in NICU and PICU," *Journal of Pediatric Nursing*, 12 (3), 169-177.
- Seligman, Martin E. (2006), *Learned Optimism: How To Change Your Mind And Your Life*, Random House LLC.
- Silver, Ira (1996), "Role Transitions, Objects, and Identity," *Symbolic Interaction*, 19 (1), 1-20.
- Soman, Dilip and Amar Cheema (2004), "When Goals are Counterproductive: The Effects of Violation of a Behavior Goal on Subsequent Performance," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (1), 52-62.
- Stronswold, Karin and Elley Sheffield (2004), "NICU Noise and Language Development," *Rutgers University Center for Cognitive Science Technical Report*.
- Tuncay, Linda and Cele C. Otnes (2008), "The Use of Persuasion Management Strategies by Identity-Vulnerable Consumers: The Case of Urban Heterosexual Male Shoppers," *Journal of Retailing*, 84 (4), 487-499.
- Turner, Everett B. (1969), "Marketing Professional Services," *Journal of Marketing*, 33 (4), 56-61.
- Üstüner, Tuba and Douglas B. Holt (2007), "Dominated Consumer Acculturation: The Social Construction of Poor Migrant Women's Consumer Identity Projects in a Turkish Squatter," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 34 (1), 41-56.
- Verplanken, Bas and Wendy Wood (2006), "Interventions to Break and Create Consumer Habits," *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing*, 25 (1), 90-103.
- Wrosch, Carsten, Gregory Miller, Michael F. Scheier, and Stephanie B. De Pontet (2007), "Giving up on Unattainable Goals: Benefits for Health?" *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33, 251-265.
- Wrosch, Carsten, Michael F. Scheier, Gregory Miller, Richard Schulz and Charles S. Carver (2003), "Adaptive Self-Regulation of Unattainable Goals: Goal Disengagement, Goal Reengagement, and Subjective Well-Being," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29 (12), 1494-1508.
- Wrosch, Carsten, Ella Amir, and Gregory E. Miller (2011), "Goal Adjustment Capacities, Coping, and Subjective Well-Being: The Sample Case of Caregiving for a Family Member with Mental Illness," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 100 (5), 93
- Young, Melissa M. and Melanie Wallendorf (1989), "Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust: Conceptualizing Consumer Disposition of Possessions," In *Proceedings of the AMA Winter Educator's Conference* (pp. 33-39).