
A Reflection on Consumers' Happiness: The Relevance of Care for Others, Spiritual Reflection, and Financial Detachment

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the concept of consumers' happiness and its direct relationship with financial detachment. Specifically, this research proposes a conceptual model with three supported concepts hypothesized to directly and indirectly contribute to happiness: spiritual reflection, care for others, and financial detachment. Each concept is presented with appropriate support and measurements, along with a discussion that challenges the link between the theory of need satisfaction and happiness. Findings revealed that the concepts of spiritual reflection, care for others, and financial detachment were directly or indirectly significantly related to happiness. Implications for consumers and policy makers are provided.

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Introduction

The "pursuit of happiness" is an elusive yet desirable quest. Evidence of its consumer popularity can be found in the number of advertisements that utilize the "promise" of happiness to sell products (e.g., "Happiness is a cigar called Hamlet"). Through offering products and services that satisfy consumer needs, marketers believe that they contribute to consumers' happiness (Klefsj   and Bergman 1994; Pettijohn and Pettijohn 1996; Rosati and Coate 1988). Although the idea of consumption creating happiness has been deeply ingrained into Western culture (e.g., "He who dies with the most toys wins"), recent empirical studies strongly challenge the view that increasing consumption enhances happiness (Belk 1985; O'Connell 2002; Richins 1994; Richins and Dawson 1992; Tatzel 2003). Many researchers in the fields of economics, psychology, sociology and cultural studies contest the seductive proposition that "identifying consumer needs, satisfying them, and anticipating them in the future" (Definition of the Chartered Institute of Marketing¹) enhances consumer happiness (Belk 1985; Diener and Suh 2000; Easterlin 1995; Myers 2000a; Myers 2000b; Myers and Diener 1996; O'Connell 2002).

To address happiness, consumers' relationship to income must be examined, as money is consumption's gatekeeper. To date, much happiness research related to money has focused on income, and several economics researchers noted a weak, although significant, correlation

¹ <http://www.cim.co.uk/mediastore/pressroom/reference/whatismarketing.pdf>

between real income and happiness (Diener, Sandvik, Seidlitz, and Diener 1993; Diener and Suh 2000). While this research suggests that money has a limited ability within wealthier countries to buy happiness, no known happiness research (to the authors' best knowledge) directly explores financial detachment (i.e., individuals' philosophical detachment from money accumulation). However, calls for more research addressing the relationship between consumption/materialism and happiness have been made (Kaun 2000; Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith 1999).

The central purpose of this study is to better understand the concept of happiness as related to consumption and its direct relationship to financial detachment. Specifically, the discussion begins by challenging the current link between need satisfaction and happiness. We present three supported concepts hypothesized to directly and indirectly contribute to consumer happiness: spiritual reflection, care for others, and financial detachment. Each concept is presented with appropriate support and measurements. Lastly, a conceptual model of happiness is tested using structural equation modeling and implications for consumers and policy makers are provided.

Consumer Happiness

Happiness has become an increasingly popular research topic² (Myers and Diener 1996; Easterlin 2001). Its popularity denotes the importance that the "pursuit of happiness" plays in consumers' lives. Yet, what is happiness, and how does it differ from consumer happiness? Veenhoven (1984) demonstrates, through a comprehensive literature review of happiness definitions, that the issue is complicated. The concept of happiness is confused, in part, by common, philosophical, and modern social science language and objective versus subjective measures. Ultimately, Veenhoven (1984, p. 22) defines happiness as "the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of this life-as-a-whole favorably" and does not see much of a distinction between "overall happiness" and the other commonly used proxies for happiness: life satisfaction or subjective well-being (SWB).

A number of factors have been linked to achieving happiness or well-being. Initially, the subjective well-being research addressed the impact of external demographic variables (i.e., income, age, marital status, etc.). But objective demographic variables attribute only a small amount of subjective well-being measure variance (see Diener 1984 and Diener et al. 1999 for a review). Thus, researchers turned to internal and/or psychological factors such as one's genes, personality traits, social comparison, aspiration comparison, life goals, adaptation, and coping abilities. Subjective factors are credited for contributing to the majority of one's subjective well-being (Diener et al. 1999). The present study utilizes three subjective factors (discussed later) to explain happiness as it relates to the consumer role.

Recently, the construct of "consumer happiness" was presented as "a summary variable of the important experiences in consumption, and thus integrates satisfaction and regret with positive and negative affective experiences" (Desmeules 2002, p. 5). As such, consumer happiness is an enduring feeling (Ahuvia and Friedman 1998) which integrates pleasure and pain, laughter and tears, and satisfaction and disappointment (Desmeules 2002). Desmeules notes that it "is meant to mirror general happiness in life, only for the area of consumption" (2002, p. 5). Given the proposed relationship between consumer happiness and life happiness, this research

² Happiness is also referred to within the literature as "subjective well-being, satisfaction, utility, well-being and welfare" (Easterlin, 2001, p. 465).

utilizes literature from general happiness studies and consumer research to discuss the relationship between consumption and happiness.

The concept of happiness is often linked with the concept of materialism, which is defined as “the importance a consumer attaches to worldly possessions” (Belk 1984, p. 291). A materialistic individual believes that material possessions provide the greatest source of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Today’s consumer society is awash in luxurious products, enabling almost everyone access to what was once unattainable, despite the considerable individual and societal costs (Frank 1999). Conspicuous consumption has been further advanced in Western society by the rampant exposure to glamorous lifestyles (via catalogs, television, magazines, etc.) and the “call-and-raise-the-Joneses” mentality (Easterbrook 2003, p. 140).

Within consumer research, there are two major ways of measuring materialism and its effect on happiness: materialism conceptualized as a value (Richins and Dawson 1992) and materialism perceived as a personal trait (Belk 1985). Although Richins and Dawson (1992) and Belk (1985) take two different approaches to materialism (trait versus value), they share a basic understanding of materialism and conclude with similar findings. Belk (1985) found negative correlations between materialism and happiness and between materialism and life satisfaction. Similarly, Richins and Dawson (1992) correlated materialism with various aspects of life satisfaction and concluded that high scorers on materialism were less satisfied with their lives.

Economists have also addressed materialism by illustrating the relationship between income and “material aspirations.” More specifically, as income increases throughout the consumer’s life, his or her aspirations related to material goods increase as well, often resulting in frustration (Easterlin 2001; Frey and Stutzer 2002). In other words, as consumers earn more, they continue to want more and their levels of subjective well-being remain the same.

Challenging the Idea that Need Satisfaction Enhances Happiness

To understand how disengaging from one’s income may lead to increased happiness, a discussion debating the theory of need satisfaction (i.e., satisfying an individual by providing goods for his or her consumption) is provided. This argument directly challenges the link between consumption and happiness, thus negating the importance of income in one’s life. The marketing idea that need satisfaction enhances happiness is based on four assumptions:

1. Happiness is reached by focusing on pleasurable experiences and minimizing pain.
2. Freedom of choices creates happiness.
3. Happiness is created through consumption and not production.
4. Financial capital enables consumers to satisfy their needs, thus resulting in happiness.

First, marketers assume that happiness is reached by focusing on pleasurable experiences and minimizing pain (Belk 1985). Yet, happiness is a product of not only satisfaction but also regrets, doubts, pain, and sorrow (Ahuvia and Friedman 1998). Consequently, need satisfaction cannot directly be correlated to consumer happiness because it is solely affiliated to positive emotion, whereas consumer happiness is affiliated to both positive and negative emotions. Moreover, recent studies in consumer behavior note that consumption is becoming more a result of desires than of needs or wants (Belk, Ger, and Askegaard 2003). Yet, “desire does not desire satisfaction. To the contrary, desire desires desire. The reason images are so desirable is that they never satisfy” (Elliot 1997, p. 288). Here, happiness is not reached through satisfaction but through the entertainment of desires.

The second assumption relates to the freedom of choice and its relation to happiness. In most marketing literature, the freedom to choose, which includes convenient shopping, product availability, and variety, helps consumers satisfy their needs (Ng 1997). Freedom of choice facilitates consumer need satisfaction, but too many choices can prove to be detrimental. This aspect of “consumer hyperchoice” can be experienced as a form of tyranny and promotes discontentment rather than happiness. A high number of alternatives from which to choose can create conflicts, fear of loss, and lower levels of decision satisfaction (Desmeules 2002; Schwartz 2004; Kaun 2005; Mick, Broniarczyk, and Haidt 2004). Hence, consumer happiness does not necessarily relate to a higher number of alternatives from which to choose.

The third assumption relates to Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of need satisfaction (Maslow 1954). The pyramidal theory of need satisfaction asserts that individuals who consume “education, hobbies, and travel” (Solomon 1996, p. 133) reach self-actualization (Solomon 2002). As self-actualization is the highest point of human development, this theory assumes that happiness is reached through consumption rather than production. However, numerous economics studies strongly challenge the postulation that consumption, rather than production, enhances happiness. For example, the producer economists note that prioritizing work and production is a better route to happiness and human development than the route through consumption (Campbell 1981; Lane 1992). Productive activities, even painful and disturbing ones, provide challenges and feelings of achievement (Campbell 1981; Lane 1992), which ultimately enhance happiness (Veenhoven 1994, 1997). In addition, the theory of need satisfaction assumes a deterministic perception of the nature of consumers. Under need satisfaction theory, consumers are rational and reactive to their environment. They consciously and rationally seek higher orders of need satisfaction (Maslow, 1954). This view invokes that there is always a lack of a certain category of needs and that needs are natural or even biological to consumers (Belk et al. 2003). However, in today’s fragmented world where choices are unlimited, the “multiplicity of competing values and beliefs make the very idea of rational choices meaningless” (Elliot 1997, p. 289). Consumers are no longer predictable individuals searching to consciously satisfy identifiable needs³. They are unpredictable and irrational, and their happiness appears much more complex than simply having their needs satisfied.

Finally, marketers assume that financial capital enables consumers to satisfy their needs and therefore enhances their happiness. Such a notion finds support in empirical, scientific, and economic views of happiness. For example, initial studies on well-being concentrated on finding an economic solution to individuals’ happiness (Koopmans 1957). Such research concentrated on showing how and why the economic system could bring happiness in one’s life.

As noted earlier, later studies have concentrated on the relationship between happiness and income and have found that while there is a positive relationship between income and well-being, the correlation is not strong in wealthier countries (Diener et al. 1993; Diener and Suh 2000). In particular, time series research found that income growth did not increase with happiness for many industrialized nations (Easterlin 1995) and that it takes more income to be as happy today than it did in previous decades (Easterlin 2001). One explanation of this occurrence is that wealthier nations hit a point of “diminishing returns” when it comes to income growth and well-being (Diener and Seligman 2004). After a point of meeting “basic” needs,

³ For instance, one may question what rationality stands behind the consumption lifestyle of a male consumer who is an executive vice-president for a multinational corporation during the week, runs naked during the Burning Man celebration in the desert, drives a Harley Davidson bike on weekends, and dresses as a woman in evenings. Similarly, some homeless refuse free shelters while other consumers acquire objects compulsively.

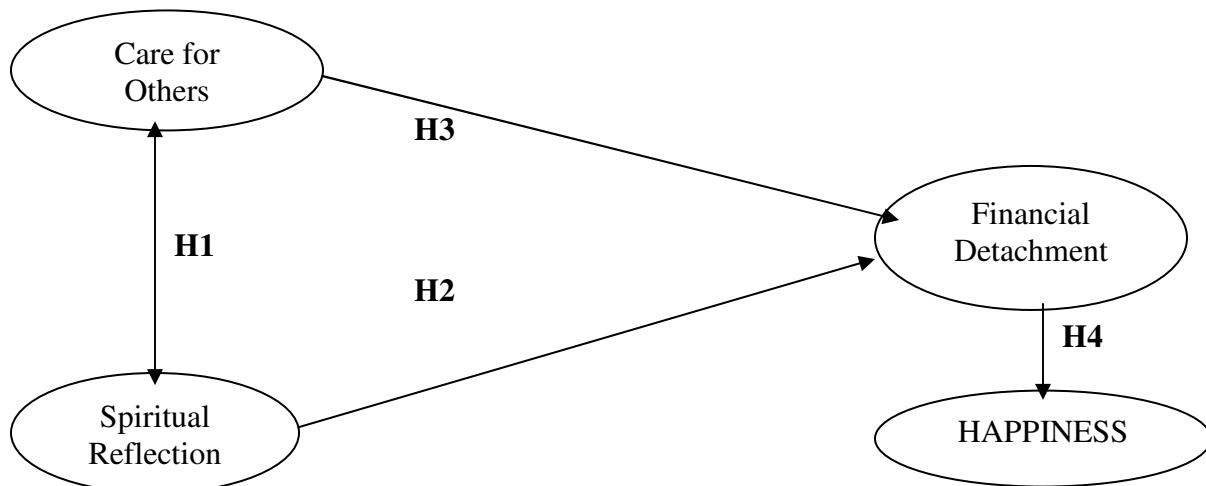
consumers' happiness doesn't benefit appreciatively with increased income (Diener and Biswas-Diener 2002).

In opposition to this theory of economic progress and financial capital, other researchers emphasize that the desire for money and/or wealth is exhausting and can relegate people to, among other things, a state of perpetual unhappiness and increased levels of stress (De Graaf, Naylor, and Wann 2001; Thoits and Hannan 1979). Easterbrook (2003, p. 177) notes that "what people really want in life — love, friendship, respect, family, standing, fun — is not priced and does not pass through the market. If something isn't priced you can't buy it, so possessing money may not help that much." These findings and observations are consistent with Max Weber's view of capitalist societies in which individuals are instruments of the economics of the market; they are possessed and even alienated by the economic system. Following this perspective, Fromm (1975) argues that the capitalist man is no longer capable of happiness - the modern man only negotiates or trades and ultimately suffers from a non-creative disposition. Here, money and its economic power conflict rather than promote happiness. This viewpoint has recently appeared in studies on voluntary simplicity, downshifting, or simple living (Cherrier 2002; Cherrier and Murray 2001).

Theoretical Model

Responsive to the idea that pleasurable experiences, freedom of choices, and money accumulation do not necessarily enhance consumer happiness, this study considers philosophical and sociological views on what causes happiness (Fromm 1960, 1975; Hadot 1981, 2002). It also draws upon relevant literature related to happiness in the psychological, economic, and consumer behavior fields. The proposed tested model is illustrated in Figure 1. The subsequent discussion draws upon three factors—spiritual reflection, care for others, and financial detachment—that we hypothesize will be positively and significantly related to happiness.

Figure 1: Proposed Model Tested in the Study



Spiritual Reflection

In his research on happiness, Fromm sees the modern man as an instrument of the market who will not be happy unless he practices certain self-discipline and lays down a number of rules of conduct (Fromm 1960, 1975). According to Fromm, discipline, concentration, patience, and real dedication are the four most important criteria to live a happy life (Fromm 1975). Drawing upon this work, Hadot (1981, 2002) related Fromm's concept of self-discipline to the importance of spiritual exercise for happiness. For Hadot, in order to live a happy life, individuals have to question the meaning of life and follow their spiritual needs. We therefore define spiritual reflection for the purposes of this study as, 'a personal search, journey, or quest to connect with one's true or authentic self.' As such, spirituality reflection comes to include the set of feelings, tastes, practices, objects, values, knowledge, beliefs, and experiences which are associated with the search for connection with an authentic self.

Within the happiness literature, religion has received much attention, whereas spirituality has been emphasized less. This is unfortunate given that Western nations are decreasing their attendance within formal worship, yet spirituality is on the rise (Easterbrook 2003). While there is a distinction between religion and spiritual reflection⁴, the two concepts are intertwined (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, et al. 1997). Thus, we present religious literature that is relevant to the concept of spiritual reflection. Religious meaning, defined as "the process of turning to religion in an effort to find a sense of direction in life, and a sense that there is a reason for one's existence" (Krause 2003, p. S160), is similar to our concept of spiritual reflection. Krause's (2003) research, which examined the relationship between religious meaning and subjective well-being among older African Americans and Caucasians, found that there was an association between greater religious meaning and greater life satisfaction. Furthermore, personal spirituality (i.e., "personal aspects of religious or spiritual involvement, such as experiencing a connection with a higher power and integrating religious or spiritual beliefs into everyday life," p. 222) moderates an individual's ability to deal with life's stresses, thus resulting in a higher level of subjective well-being compared with individuals who exhibit lower levels of personal spirituality (Fabricatore, Handal, and Fenzel 2000).

Consumer researchers have found that income, aspects of materialism, and subjective well-being are not positively related in individuals who rated high in religiosity (La Barbera and Gurham 1997). To explain this phenomenon, La Barbara and Gurham (1997, p. 90) state that "[s]acred values emphasizing qualities such as family, relationship with God, etc. in preference to economic accomplishments and possessions may render income to be less significant in impacting SWB." Sood and Nasu (1995) also found United States Protestants high in religiosity to be more concerned with prices, distrusting of advertisements, and questioning the relationship between price and quality more than individuals who rated low in religiosity. These findings are consistent with Belk's (1983) observations that religious teachings, which include caring for others and sharing, often oppose the materialistic nature of consumer culture today.

Based on Hadot's conceptualization of happiness and research on religion, we propose the following:

⁴ Religious behaviors and beliefs are one means by which individuals may seek to experience and express spirituality. Religion offers a cultural, social, and organizational framework by which individuals may anchor their spiritual search, yet this search may also occur outside of a religious framework. Thus, the term spirituality includes both the most intrinsic or personal aspects of religiosity as well as those expression and experiences of "divine" connection which occur outside religious culture, group, or tradition.

Hypothesis 1: Spiritual Reflection will be positively related to Care for Others
Hypothesis 2: Spiritual Reflection will be positively related to Financial Detachment

Care for Others

The relationship between caring for others and happiness has been discussed by a number of scholars. As Foucault (1997) noted, happiness can only be accomplished with relationships of dependence to others. For Foucault, caring for oneself “involves complex relations with the other, because this ethos of freedom is also a way to be able to care for others” (1997, p. 287). Foucault elevates care for others and curiosity to two of the prime elements of living a good life (1997). Etzoni (1997, 2001) expands this viewpoint to include the creation of a communitarian environment and the development of global communities as ways to enhance happiness. Thus, each author emphasizes the importance of caring for others in relation to living a happy life. Recent happiness literature also documents the impact of others on one’s happiness. Specifically, Veenhoven’s (2002) analysis of the World Database of Happiness notes a strong correlation between happiness and the capability to care for others.

Caring for others involves the acknowledgement of our responsibility toward others, which includes being stewards of the environment. Feeling responsible toward others is a compound of two principal functions: restraint and activity. With regard to consumer behavior, individuals who consciously care for others are concerned with the common good (Jolibert 1981). When purchasing products, they act as socially conscious consumers who take into account the public consequences of their private consumption (Webster 1975; Mohr, Webb, and Harris 2001). As such, they actively seek products and services from companies that help others and/or deliberately reject products manufactured by unethical firms (Curlo 1999). This behavior is called socially responsible consumption behavior (Mohr et al. 2001), conceptualized by purchase decisions motivated not only by a desire to satisfy personal needs but also by a concern for the welfare of society in general (Antil 1984; Antil and Bennett 1979). Unfortunately, the current consumer marketplace makes it difficult for socially responsible consumption behavior to occur, and consumer hyperchoice may even “reduce willingness to engage in altruistic and pro-social behaviors” (Mick et al. 2004, p. 209).

In this study, socially responsible consumer behavior manifested as care for others is hypothesized as a component of consumers’ happiness through a positive relationship with financial detachment. Thus,

Hypothesis 3: Care for Others will be positively related to Financial Detachment.

Financial Detachment

Increased wealth comes with a price for some: material aspirations grow (Easterlin 2001; Frey and Stutzer 2002), stress increases (Thoits and Hannan 1979), relationships are tested (Smith and Razzell 1975), and less time can be devoted to leisure (Diener and Biswas-Diener, 2002). In essence, individuals are experiencing a “consumer hyperchoice” shopping environment marked by “ever-increasing” consumer shopping, purchase options, day-to-day demands, and decreased time (Mick et al. 2004). As Mick et al. (2004, p. 209) summarize, the effects of hyperchoice could include “diminishment of mindfulness or attentional control,” judgementalism, impatience, and incivility. Beyond impacting the quality of consumers’ interactions, individuals have less time available to devote to their family, community, and leisure activities. For

example, Americans specifically work more than those in many other industrialized, wealthy nations (Sennett 1998). What free time that does remain is primarily reserved for watching television (2.58 hours on average a day), compared to socializing with friends (.78 hours on average a day) (American Time Use Survey 2006). Thus, the end result is less time spent caring for others and reflecting on one's life, as well as the diminishing quality of these interactions.

Easterbrook (2003) suggests that "waking up from the American dream" needs to happen for consumers. In other words, material goods and personal freedom do not equal happiness; happiness needs to "come from elsewhere." There is some evidence that consumers are starting to realize the financial and consumption costs of desiring more. For example, American television is replete with shows devoted to reducing credit card debt and limiting clutter in the home. Industries predicated on organizing one's "stuff" have blossomed (e.g., The Container Store, *Real Simple* magazine, etc.). Inglehart (1977) proposed that values antithetical to materialism are occurring with more frequency within industrialized nations. These "postmaterialism" values embrace self-expression, sense of community, quality of life, and eschew materialistic values such as purchasing and achievement. Empirical research by Inglehart (1997) indicates that the number of individuals embracing post-materialist values has increased within industrialized nations.

Research addressing the outcomes of setting an excessive value on money may explain the surge in postmaterialism. Findings revealed that the cost of prioritizing money in one's life (i.e., "I firmly believe money can solve all of my problems" and "I would do practically anything legal for money if it were enough"), results in lower levels of well-being (Kirkcaldy, Furnham, and Martin 1998). Lastly, Max Weber (1968) strongly prescribed individuals' detachment from money accumulation, citing that it is the controlling tool for the ones in power. Therefore,

Hypothesis 4: Financial Detachment will be positively related to happiness.

The Study

The Sample

A pilot test was conducted using a convenience student sample from a Midwestern University in the United States (n=101, 19 to 42 years of age, 52% males). Respondents were drawn from three undergraduate business classes. Respondents pre-tested each of the items within the four conceptual measures and the overall theoretical model that were later used for the primary study.

For the primary study, measures on happiness, financial detachment, spiritual reflection, and socially responsible consumption (i.e., care for others) were included in a survey sent to 300 respondents. Of the 266 respondents who returned the survey, 261 completed the four scales without missing data. Respondents were aged between 25 to 89 years of age with an average age of 56. Forty-one percent of the sample was male. The income and education distribution within the sample was representative of the Midwestern state selected for the study (i.e., \$44,000 is the median income and 50% have some college education). None of the scales used in the study significantly correlated with income level, age or religious preference. The distribution of the data collected from the 261 respondents did not exhibit skewness or kurtosis distribution.

The Measures

Four measures were selected to evaluate the concepts of care for others, spiritual reflection, financial detachment, and happiness (See Table 1 for the specific items used.). Three measures (care for others, spiritual reflection, and financial detachment) were drawn from previous studies (Antil and Bennett 1979; Cherrier 2002), whereas the one-item happiness measure was self-constructed.

TABLE 1 - Items for Measures Used in the Model

Items for Financial Detachment (Cherrier, 2002; 7 pts. Likert)
My happiness is not based on how much I earn /will earn Getting an important salary is not a priority to me
Items for Spiritual Reflection (Cherrier, 2002; 7 pts. Likert)
I very often think about the meaning of my life I follow my spiritual aspirations
Items for Care for Others (Antil and Bennett 1979: 4 items extracted, 5 Pts Likert)
I don't think we are doing enough to encourage manufacturers to use recycled packages Natural resources must be preserved even if people must do without some products All consumers should be interested in the environmental consequences of the products they purchase I have often thought that if we could just get by with a little less, there would be more left for future generations
Item for Happiness Scale (10 point scale)
In general, how happy or unhappy do you usually feel?

Care for others

The socially responsible consumption behavior scale (SRCB) developed by Antil and Bennett (1979) and reviewed by Antil (1984) was used for this study. The SRCB scale is composed of 40 Likert-type items (agree-disagree) scored on a five-point basis. Antil (1984) assessed reliability, dimensionality, and validity of the SRCB scale using two non-student samples (n=690 and n=98) with Cronbach's alpha .93 and .92, respectively. Principal component factor analyses were conducted for the SRCB scale to extract factors. After Varimax rotation and Scree tests, the factor analysis resulted in eight factors. Specifically, items 5, 7, 8, and 14 loaded highly on one factor. Those four items presented on Table 1 essentially reflect the construct pertaining to care for others and care for the environment. This factor pattern is consistent with the concept of caring for others relevant for this study. The results from confirmatory factor analysis on the four-item "caring for others" concept using structural equation modeling (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988) with AMOS software indicate a good model fit ($\chi^2 = 1.094$, p-value = 0.579, NFI = 1.00, RSMEA = 0.00).

The test for reliability using SPSS reported a Cronbach's alpha score of .82, greater than the .7 required for reliability. Because Cronbach's Alpha assumes that all items have equal reliabilities (ϑ equivalent), it is preferable to consider the standardized composite reliability if there is a small number of items measuring one construct. The standardized composite reliability for the four items measuring care for others in this study was estimated using structural equation modeling and reported a .83, which is above .70 for acceptable reliability (Kline 1998).

Spiritual Reflection: Two items were taken from the Personal Growth scale (Cherrier 2002) that were consistent with the concept of spiritual reflection (see Table 1). The scales were pre-tested, within the study's pilot study, using a convenience sample of students from a Midwestern university and re-assessed for this study on the non-student sample from a Midwestern state. The standard composite reliabilities (Pc) for Spiritual Reflection were .83 (n = 101) and .72 (n = 261). The average variances (Pvc(ξ)) for spiritual reflection were .79 (n=101) and .56 (n = 261), which are above .50 for convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Gerbing and Anderson 1988).

Financial Detachment

Two items were taken from the Attitudes Toward Money scale (Cherrier 2002) that measured the concept of financial detachment (see Table 1). The scales were pre-tested, within the study's pilot study, using a convenience sample of students from a Midwestern university and re-assessed for the study on the non-student sample from a Midwestern state. The standardized composite reliabilities (Pc) for financial detachment were 0.71 (n = 101) and 0.71 (n= 261). The average variances (Pvc(ξ)) for financial detachment were .56 (n = 101) and 0.57 (n = 261).

Happiness

One item was used to measure happiness. Respondents were asked to answer the question "In general, how happy or unhappy do you usually feel?" using a 10 point ranking ranging from extremely happy (feeling ecstatic, joyous, or fantastic) to extremely unhappy (utterly depressed or completely down). The use of this type of item is consistent with previous happiness or well-being studies and has been shown to exhibit adequate validity and reliability, with some exceptions (for a review see Diener 1984).

The pair-wise comparison using structural equation modeling with AMOS showed a good model fit for the pre-test sample (n=101) ($\chi^2 = 0.703$, p-value = 0.402; NFI = 1.00, RSMEA = 0.00) and for the study sample (n=261) ($\chi^2 = 0.509$, p-value = 0.476, NFI = 1.00, RSMEA = 0.00)⁵ (see Table 2). For each measure, discriminate analysis was confirmed using the χ^2 difference test (Gerbing and Anderson 1988) and the Fornell-Lacker Discriminant validity test (Fornell and Larcker 1981) (see Tables 3 and 4).

⁵ According to Hu and Bentler (1998), to accept a model, Chi-square must be significant (p > 0.1). The Normed Fit Index (NFI), which indicates the proportion of the improvement of the overall fit of our model relative to a null model (one in which the observed variables are assumed to be uncorrelated), need to be above the 0.90 required for a good fit (Bentler 1990). The Root Mean Square Error (RMSEA), which tends to 0 as the overall fit of the model improves, needs to be equal to 0 for a perfect model fit (Browne and Cudek 1993).

TABLE 2: Pairwise Comparison

	χ^2 p-value	NFI	RSMEA	Squared Corr.	Min λ p-value	Composite Reliability (Pc)	Average Variance (Pvc(ξ))
SPRITUAL REFLECTION							
Financial Detachment	0.509 0.476	1.00	0.000	0.091	0.000	0.720	0.560
Care for Others	3.731 0.881	1.00	0.000	0.076	0.000	0.720	0.560
FINANCIAL DETACHMENT							
Spiritual Reflection	0.509 0.476	1.00	0.000	0.091	0.000	.710	.570
Care for Others	8.859 0.354	1.00	0.020	0.037	0.000	.710	.570
CARE FOR OTHERS							
Financial Detachment	8.859 0.354	1.00	0.020	0.037	0.000	.830	.540
Spiritual Reflection	3.731 0.881	1.00	0.000	0.076	0.000	.830	.540

Table 3: Pairwise X2 Difference Test of Discriminant Validity

	Constrained			Unconstrained			X ² Diff. test		
	X ²	Φ_{ij}^2	df	X ²	Φ_{ij}^2	df	X ² Diff.	df Diff.	P value X ² Diff.
Spirit-Reflect – Fin. Det.	4.925	0.21 0	4	0.50 9	0.09 1	1	4.416	3	0.010
Spirit-Reflect – Care for Others	16.455	0.07 6	13	3.73 1	0.07 6	8	12.724	5	0.000
Care for Others – Fin. Det.	22.725	0.03 4	13	8.85 9	0.03 7	8	5.262	5	0.001

TABLE 4: Fornell-Lacker Discriminant Validity Test

	Average Variance (Pvc(ξ))	Φ_{ij}^2 Phi ²
Spiritual Reflection – Financial Detachment	.560 / .570	0.091
Spiritual Reflection – Care for Others	.560 / .540	0.076
Care for Others – Financial Detachment	.540 / .570	0.037

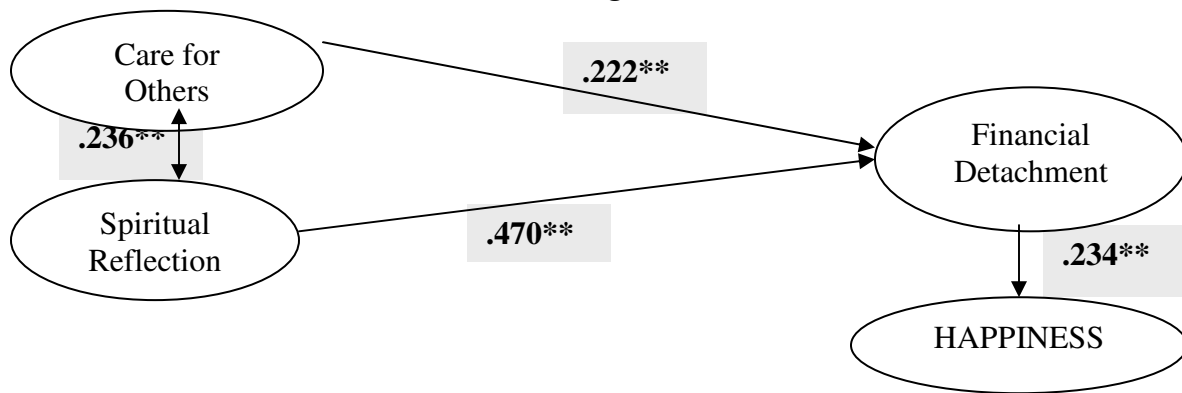
For discriminant validity: (Pvc(ξ)) > Φ_{ij}^2

Results

The model fit for each measure was estimated using structural equation modeling approach with AMOS software. The maximum likelihood method (ML) was employed because of its superiority to the generalized least squares estimation method at sample size 261 (> 250) (Hu and Bentler 1995).

The Chi-Square of 52.269 with 0.386 probability of fit indicates that the model demonstrates a good fit. Moreover, it reports a Goodness of Fit Index of 0.996, a CFI of 0.991 and a Tucker-Lewis Index of 0.989, which are all above the 0.90 recommended for a good fit (Hu and Bentler 1981). This model reflects an RMSEA of 0.013, indicating a perfect model fit (Browne and Cudek 1993). Helter 0.05 index reports 336 as the largest sample size for which one could accept our model, which is above 200 for a good fit. Finally, this model reports the information theoretic as follow AIC (108.269) < BCC (111.217) < CAIC (236.076) < BIC (277.653).

Figure 2: Evaluation of the Proposed Model with Standardized Regression Weights



** Significant Standardized Regression Weights at p-value < 0.05.

Table 5: Estimation of Direct and Indirect Effects in the Model

	P-value	Standard Estimate
Spiritual Reflection – Financial Detachment	0.000	0.113
Care for Others – Spiritual Reflection	0.007	0.089
Financial Detachment – Happiness	0.002	0.097
Care for Others – Financial Detachment - Happiness	0.019	0.050
Spiritual Reflection – Financial Detachment – Happiness	0.033	0.060

All four hypotheses were supported, as each p value related to each hypothesized direct effect was lower than 0.05 and therefore significant (see Figure 2 and Table 5). Moreover, all indirect effects were also supported: spiritual reflection has a positive effect on happiness through financial detachment (SE = 0.06, t value = 1.833 and p-value = 0.033), and care for others has a positive effect on happiness through financial detachment (SE = 0.05, t value = 2.08, and p-value = 0.019).

Discussion and Conclusion

This research challenges the common notion that having more money and products is always better. First, an argument was presented that rebuked the idea that the theory of need satisfaction contributes to happiness. Similar to Belk et al.'s (2003) description of the cycle of desire, the argument was put forward that when desire is realized and need satisfied, another need is found and happiness is never reached. According to this perspective, happiness is reached by individuals who consciously choose to restrain themselves. Next, a model was offered that represents the importance of financial detachment to happiness. Specifically, it proposes that spirituality and care for others are also directly related to financial detachment and indirectly to happiness.

This investigation of financial detachment calls into question the equation of a happier life with more money and fulfilled material needs. It therefore reinforces previous consumer research that has illustrated that materialism is negatively related to happiness (Belk 1995; Richins 1994; Richins and Dawson 1992; O'Connell 2002; Tatzel 2003). It also lends support to economic research that found weak correlations between income and happiness (Diener et al. 1993; Diener and Suh 2000). Unlike other studies that have addressed money, this research takes a novel approach by looking not at actual income but rather at consumers' perceived relationships with income.

The research also found significant, although indirect, relationships between care for others, spiritual reflection, and happiness. With regard to spiritual reflection, the study broke away from using traditional religious measures (i.e., church attendance, religious denominations, etc.) and embraced the idea of spirituality which is seeing increased popularity in Western countries (Easterbrook 2003). Furthermore, the concept of caring for others utilized the socially responsible consumption behavior scale. Socially responsible consumption behavior is becoming increasingly important as environmental concerns have reached a cultural "tipping point" in industrialized nations. The significant relationship between caring for others and happiness offers consumers another reason to be good stewards of the environment. In conclusion, these findings provide further support for postmaterialist values (Inglehart 1977).

As marketing reflects on the developments in the social, cultural, political, and economic environments in general, this study has important implications for consumers and policy makers. The research provides evidence that need satisfaction does not necessarily create happiness. This finding is in stark contrast to traditional marketing approaches. If consumers associate happiness with financial detachment, spiritual reflection, and care for others, there is a disconnection between consumers' and marketers' perceptions of achieving happiness. The ideas of "less is more" and having too many consumption choices is bad (Desmeules 2002; Schwartz 2004; Kaun 2005) are antithetical to a company's bottom line. This research also provides support to the downshifting/voluntary simplicity movement. Realistically, however, the vast majority of consumers are not going to markedly reduce their consumption as those in the downshifting/voluntary simplicity movement have (Belk 2001). Western culture is cluttered with messages of excessive consumption, facilitated by high rates of television viewing. Consumers have been socialized to the "more is better" mantra. Yet, a clear message, perhaps delivered through traditional marketing mediums, needs to be sent to consumers explaining that they can be happier with fewer material goods and with a focus shifted away from money accumulation. Another method proposed to extinguish consumers' lust for consumption is to limit their exposure to advertisements selling luxurious products (Veenhoven in press). Frank (1999) has also proposed rewarding consumers for saving money via tax exemptions and taxing luxury goods.

This research also highlights the importance placed upon spirituality and care for others. Marketers need to embrace marketing as a business philosophy by using the societal marketing approach to assist consumers in their desire to express their spirituality and care for others (Crocker and Linden 1997; Rosenblatt 1999). Recently, marketers have moved in this direction by electing to integrate tribal marketing, which facilitates the communal gathering of individuals (Cova 1996) or brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) in their strategies. Examples of these types of communities can be found at Jeep Camp and Harley Owners Group (HOG) meetings and events. The result of this interface between community and brand is that consumers become interwoven into the marketing process and the gap between consumption and production fades away. Consumers become producers who are free to "create new meanings for goods through their own idiosyncratic performance of everyday life" (Elliot 1997 p. 290; Solomon 2003). Consumers could be encouraged to find meaning in lowering their consumption lifestyle. This could be achieved by having consumers produce what they consume (e.g., making their own clothes, producing their furniture, or growing vegetables in their garden). They also should be encouraged and provided with means to share, both online and offline, their strategies to reduce consumption. One example of this phenomenon can be found in Belk's (2001) discussion of his experiences monitoring the online bulletin board, "Simplifying the holidays." Beyond providing a vehicle (i.e., Internet bulletin boards, websites, etc.) by which consumers can share their consumption-related information, public policy makers could do a better job informing consumers of companies that practice the societal marketing concept.

Lastly, further research on the importance of financial detachment and the indirect impact of care for others and spiritual reflection on happiness should be tested in other studies using wider samples. Other studies may also employ diverse empirical methods such as experiments or surveys, multi-method multi-trait designs, as well as constructs based on ecological awareness. Consumer researchers may also turn their attention to just how to change the tide of consumption; how do we teach "less is more" in a culture of "more is better"?

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