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Attitude toward Consumption and Subjective Well-Being

The current study looked at the effects of attitude toward consumption (positive or negative) on subjective well-being. This research studied attitude toward consumption at both the personal (micro) level and societal (macro) level and subjective well-being in terms of cognitive well-being and affective well-being. Results indicated that micro attitudes, whether positive or negative, were positively related to a consumer's subjective well-being. In contrast, macro attitudes were negatively related to subjective well-being. We posit that these findings could be due to micro attitudes enhancing the person's feeling of autonomy and control. In contrast, macro attitudes may create concerns beyond the person's control. For those who wish to impact societal-level consumption, these findings provide empirical support for the idea that focusing on the personal benefits of anticonsumption may be more effective than emphasizing larger societal concerns. We explore the potential implications of these findings for mandated vs. voluntary approaches to reducing consumption.

Well-being is a broad field which has been studied from many different perspectives. For example, there are studies which define well-being in terms of macro-economic variables, social health, or sound environmental practices. Such approaches build from the idea that people are better off when living with a stable economy and a healthy social and ecological environment. Perhaps the most widely studied approach to exploring well-being is the field of subjective well-being. Diener and Scollon (2014) have noted that, in recent years, over 10,000 articles per year have been published on the topic of subjective well-being. This approach looks at people's own perceptions of their well-being. They explore both whether people think that they are doing well (cognitive well-being) and whether they feel good at this point in their life (affective well-being). The various approaches to studying well-being need not be totally distinct. For example, Diener, Kesebir, and Lucas (2008) proposed that measures of subjective well-being be included alongside more traditional economic measures to assess macro-economic health.

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Consumer researchers are increasingly concerned about well-being. The study of consumer well-being reflects a wide diversity of ways to look at well-being (Mick et al. 2012). Sirgy and Lee (2006) in their study have developed a comprehensive measure of consumer well-being that not only accounts for consumer benefits but also includes the benefits to society at large. Further research on consumer well-being by Sirgy et al. (2008) has validated the relationship between consumer well-being and other constructs such as life satisfaction in a cross-cultural setting. More recently, Devezer et al. (2014) recently looked at consumer well-being within the contexts of consumer overspending, environmentally friendly behaviors, and charitable donations. Although some of this research has focused on subjective well-being (Ahuvia 2002; Ahuvia and Friedman 1998; La Barbera and Gürhan 1997; Silvera, Lavack, and Kropp 2008), this aspect of well-being appears to be underrepresented in the larger context of consumer well-being, especially given how widely it is studied elsewhere.

In the current research, we look at whether attitudes toward consumption affect a person's subjective well-being. Studies exist which explore the relationship of subjective well-being and proconsumption attitudes such as materialism and consumer passions. Although somewhat complex, these studies have generally found a negative relationship between proconsumption attitudes and subjective well-being. A recent meta-analysis between materialism and well-being supports this negative relationship (Dittmar et al. 2014). It is interesting to note that Dittmar et al. (2014) found that the relationship differs based on what aspect of well-being is being studied. The largest effects were associated with risky health and consumer behaviors and for negative self-appraisals. In contrast, the weakest effects were for the two primary dimensions of subjective well-being (cognitive and affective dimensions). The results from this meta-analysis do indicate that a person's positive inclination toward consumption impacts his or her well-being and that the type of well-being must be considered when studying that effect. What has not been explored is whether this occurs across the full range of attitudes a person can hold toward consumption, from positive attitudes toward consumption to negative attitudes toward consumption.

Money's Limited Effect on Subjective Well-Being

The effect of people's ability to consume on subjective well-being has been widely studied. These studies have covered the full range of ability to consume, from the very wealthy to the very poor. Since the pioneering work

of Easterlin (1974) which found no relationship between growing national income and feelings of well-being, researchers in both economics and psychology have studied whether or not money actually can buy happiness (see also Easterlin 1995; Easterlin 2009; McBride 2001). The basic finding after substantial research in this area is that, for low levels of income, more money does bring greater life satisfaction and happiness (Tatzel 2014). However, money can only buy so much happiness. Kahneman and Deaton (2010) found that, in 2012 dollars, it takes about \$75,000 of income per year to purchase all the happiness you can buy. At levels substantially below \$75,000, a little money will go a long ways toward improving a person's subjective well-being. However, the additional benefit of greater income diminishes significantly until it levels off at about \$75,000. Thus, there appears to be a logarithmic function between annual income and subjective well-being which asymptotes at \$75,000.

The reason this happens appears to be that money is quite able to alleviate many of the ills that face people when they are poor but when such problems are alleviated, money can do very little to improve long-term happiness. The problems created by lack of money can definitely have a negative impact on well-being (Kay and Jost 2003; Sengupta et al. 2012). However, when we move beyond using money to solve these problems and start trying to use our financial resources to make us happy, it appears as though the happiness we buy is fleeting. According to Chancellor and Lyubomirsky (2014) this is due to two forces being at work. One of these is *hedonic adaptation*. When we acquire something it gives us an initial bump in happiness, but that good feeling quickly diminishes due to familiarity. The other force at work is *changing aspirations*. When more higher-end desires drive our spending, as these desires are satisfied, new desires quickly develop for bigger and better things. How hedonic adaptation and changing aspirations work together to undermine permanent gains in life satisfaction from increased consumption was illustrated quite well by Chancellor and Lyubomirsky (2014). They said that if we remodel the bathroom, the joy of the nice bathroom dwindles and it quickly becomes the new normal (hedonic adaptation). Unfortunately, as the new bathroom ceases to look good to us, the den starts to look shabby by comparison (changing aspirations). So, in the long run, we were right back where we started—dissatisfied with a room in the house. We have not become more satisfied with our house. We have just changed the room that we are dissatisfied with. The thrill of the new is gone and its only lasting impact is that we traded one desire for another. That is why we can get gains in life satisfaction at lower levels of income but only temporary thrills with income above \$75,000 per year (in 2012 US dollars). Therefore, having

the resources to consume does appear to have a limited impact on one's subjective well-being.

In the current paper, we explore subjective well-being within the context of the attitude toward consumption and not the ability to consume. Attitudes are not likely to be subject to hedonic adaptation and changing aspirations the same way that material goods are. Also, several concepts that deal more with the attitudinal side of wealth have been shown to relate to well-being. Ganglmair-Wooliscroft and Lawson (2011) found a definite and strong relationship between lifestyle and subjective well-being. Those lifestyles associated with higher incomes tended to have higher subjective well-being but other factors such as the way the lifestyle segments approach money and wealth also affected subjective well-being. In another set of studies, empirical evidence indicates that, even when it had no effect on income, people were less happy when they were unemployed than when they were employed (Berger 2013; Clark 2006; Clark and Oswald 1994; Winkelmann and Winkelmann 1998). Furthermore, it is well established that money spent on experiential purchases are enjoyed for a much longer time than the purchase of physical products (Carter and Gilovich 2014). Materialism is another variable that has been related to subjective well-being. It appears that those who are more materialistic tend to have lower levels of subjective well-being (Burroughs and Rindfleisch 2002). This negative effect on well-being also appears to exist for people who have greater passion for new products (Oropesa 1995).

Results such as these raise a very important question that has not been adequately studied to date. *Does a person's attitude toward consuming affect his or her subjective well-being?* This was the overriding question which we sought to address in the research presented here. In doing so, we looked at both positive and negative attitudes toward consumption. Although previous research has focused primarily on positive attitudes toward consumption (e.g., materialism), studies have not yet looked into the negative attitudes toward consumption (e.g., anticonsumption). In the current paper, we explored the relationship of both positive and negative attitudes toward consumption to subjective well-being.

As subjective well-being has both a cognitive and an affective component, we looked at this by addressing two separate research questions—one which relates to feelings (affect) and one which relates to life satisfaction (cognition). Also, as the attitude one holds toward consumption is multifaceted, we investigated these two research questions from several different angles. In the next section, we discuss this study's constructs of interest and research questions.

CONSTRUCTS OF INTEREST AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In studying subjective well-being, it is important to make the distinction between happiness and satisfaction with life. Happiness is an affective state which manifests itself primarily in the way one feels about life. Life satisfaction on the other hand is more of a cognitive state that deals with how one evaluates life. Happiness then deals with whether or not one feels good, whereas life satisfaction deals with whether or not one thinks he or she is doing well (see Diener et al. 2010a). The reason why this distinction is important is because research has shown that people believe that they are doing better if they have more money even if it actually does not make them feel any better (Chancellor and Lyubomirsky 2014; Diener et al. 2010a; Diener et al. 2010b; Sengupta et al. 2012; Ng 2013). This could be due to a well-established finding that people actually do believe that money will make them happier (Ahuvia 2008; Jackson 2008; McBride 2001). So our cognitions may convince us that we are doing better with greater income or wealth but this assessment of our lives does not necessarily translate into greater happiness. Thus, in studying the role that attitude toward consumption plays, we will be able to look at both people's affective feelings about life and their satisfaction with life. The two research questions addressed by the current research are:

Research Question No. 1: Does the attitude one holds toward consumption affect one's satisfaction with life (cognitive appraisal)?

Research Question No. 2: Does the attitude one holds toward consumption affect one's happiness (affective appraisal)?

To address these two questions, it is also important to look deeper into attitude toward consumption. Much has been written in recent years about people holding negative attitudes toward consumption. This anticonsumption research provided us with a starting part for our study. In this literature, there is a distinction between people's *object* of anticonsumption and the *purpose* for their anticonsumption (see Iyer and Muncy 2009 for a full explanation of this distinction). In terms of the *object* of anticonsumption, people can focus their anticonsumption on specific brands or products (e.g., through boycotts) or they can just generally be against consumption where they wish to reduce consumption in general. As we are interested in the general relationship between consumption attitudes and subjective well-being, we limited our research to general anticonsumption which wishes to reduce consumption in general and not more specific

anticonsumption which targets more narrow aspects of consumption such as specific brands or products.

In terms of the *purpose* of anticonsumption, there is a distinction between those who have negative attitudes toward consumption for general societal reasons (such as environmental concerns) and those who have negative attitudes toward consumption for more personal reasons (such as the desire to live a simpler life). We are interested in both of these groups and so we make a distinction between macro attitudes and micro attitudes. Those attitudes that exist for societal purposes will be labeled *macro* and those attitudes that exist for more personal reasons will be labeled *micro*. Thus, we will only be looking at general attitudes toward consumption but we will be looking at it for both *macro* (societal) concerns and *micro* (personal) concerns. These are distinct concepts. Research has shown that people who hold negative attitudes toward consumption for societal reasons do not necessarily have negative attitudes toward consumption for personal reasons and vice versa (Chatzidaki and Lee 2013; Richetin et al. 2012).

We will not just look at anticonsumption but will rather explore the full breadth of attitudes toward consumption including anticonsumption and proconsumption. Chatzidaki and Lee (2013) noted that reasons against consumption are not necessarily the opposite of reasons for consumption. They provide the example of eating meat. A vegetarian may avoid eating meat out of a desire to avoid killing animals but that does not mean that a person who eats meat does so out of a desire to kill animals. People may want to reduce consumption for reasons totally unrelated to the reasons people may give for wanting to increase consumption (Richetin et al. 2012). For example, many of the reasons given for wanting to simplify a person's life may not be inconsistent whatsoever with that person being in favor of consumption to feed economic growth (cf. Craig-Lees and Hill 2002; Eckhardt, Belk, and Devinney 2010). The separate but not opposite difference between being against something and being for something can be seen in the empirical findings that the intention to not engage in a behavior increases the amount of variance explained beyond the intention to engage in the behavior (Richetin, Conner, and Perugini 2011). For these reasons, we treat anticonsumption and proconsumption separately and not as simply two ends of the same continuum.

So, for the purpose of the current research, attitude toward consumption is broken into four related but separate attitudes. One attitude will be labeled *micro anticonsumption* and it refers to being against consumption for personal reasons. This would include, e.g., desiring to avoid excess consumption in order to live a simpler life. A second attitude will be

labeled *micro proconsumption* and will refer to those who want to consume for more personal reasons. These reasons might be to improve status, help self-esteem, achieve greater comfort, and so on. A third attitude will be labeled *macro anticonsumption* and encompasses reasons against consumption for societal reasons. The most obvious reason why someone would be a macro anticonsumer would be out of concerns for the negative impact that hyperconsumption has brought on the environment. The fourth attitude will be labeled *macro proconsumption* and will reflect positive attitudes toward consumption for societal reasons. Those who encourage consumption for the purpose of economic growth would hold macro proconsumption attitudes. As the reasons for macro and micro attitudes could be quite different and because reasons against are not the same as reasons for, we treat these four attitudes as separate (though obviously related) constructs.

The two research questions were addressed within the conceptual model presented in Figure 1. The four types of attitudes toward consumption studied were micro anticonsumption, micro proconsumption, macro anticonsumption, and macro proconsumption. The current study was designed to see if these four types of consumption attitudes impact two dimensions of subjective well-being: how people feel about life (affect) and how people evaluate their life (cognition: life satisfaction).

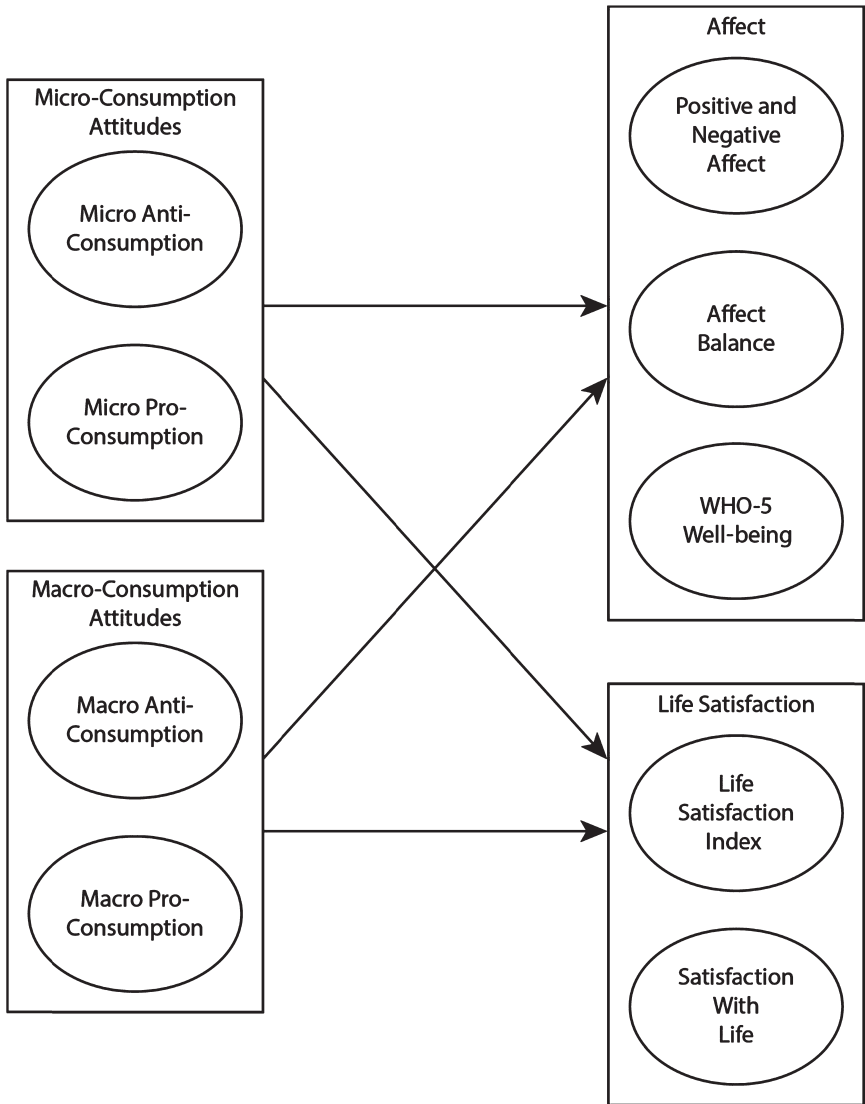
METHODOLOGY

In order to address these research questions, the current study employed four scales measuring attitudes toward consumption, three scales measuring positive and negative affect, and two scales measuring satisfaction with life (see Figure 1). We collected data from a regional quota sample and analyzed the data utilizing structural equation modeling.

Data Collection

In order to ensure adequate diversity among respondents, the current study used a quota sample based on gender (male and female) and age (under 40 and 40 or older). Following established field research data gathering procedures (e.g., Arnold and Reynolds 2003; Jones, Reynolds, and Arnold 2006), one of the researchers recruited undergraduate students and trained them to administer an online survey. Those administering the survey were instructed to contact potential nonstudent participants based on the demographic criteria established by the researchers (i.e., age and gender), explain the nature of the study to them, and seek their participation

FIGURE 1
Impact of Consumption Attitudes on Consumer Well-Being



in the study. Those who agreed to participate were asked to fill out the questionnaire using online data collection software. Though the students were not allowed to see the answers of the respondents for confidentiality reasons, the name and phone numbers of the respondents were collected so as to verify participation in the study. These data collection techniques

have been successfully used in previous research (e.g., Bitner, Booms, and Tetreault 1990). The entire data collection process lasted three weeks. A total of 1,005 questionnaires were received. The researchers then reviewed the responses to identify and delete surveys for any missing data. This procedure led to a final sample of 871 usable responses. The final sample for the study consisted of 52% females and 48% males with an average age of 40 years old.

Construct Operationalization

Altogether, we used nine scales to explore the two research questions (see Table 1). The four attitudes toward consumption scales were developed as part of an ongoing research stream into the concept of pro- and anticonsumption. These scales were developed by first generating a set of items which were then tested on an independent sample of consumers (Churchill 1979). They were then validated using several psychometric tests, and content validity was established for the scale. In the first phase of the research, the ideas and opinions that consumers hold about anticonsumption and proconsumption practices were explored. Based on the literature on consumption (both anti and pro) in trade and academic journals, the authors then generated 42 statements, which reflected general anti- and proconsumption attitudes. These statements were pretested in an undergraduate marketing research class. Based on the responses from the pretest, some changes were made to the statements to reflect better readability. This resulted in the four separate scales measuring micro anticonsumption (three items), micro proconsumption (four items), macro anticonsumption (three items), and macro proconsumption (three items).

We employed three well-established scales to measure affect. Each scale was chosen because it contained items focusing on feelings and emotions. We selected a modified version of the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS) developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) and the affect balance scale developed by Bradburn (1969). Generally, when these scales are utilized, the positively worded items are grouped together separately from the negatively worded items yielding measures of positive affect and measures of negative affect. In Table 1, we indicate which items measured positive affect and which ones measured negative affect. Also, to measure affect, we used the three affect-related questions in the World Health Organization (WHO)-Five Wellbeing Index (WHO-5).

We used two scales to measure life satisfaction. These too are scales which have been used extensively in conducting studies such as the current

TABLE 1
Measurement Items

Scale/Items*	Standardized Loading (<i>t</i> -values)	Source/ Adapted From
<i>Micro anticonsumption</i>		
I like it when I find a way to conserve	0.75 (18.60)	
The less I buy, the better I feel	0.69 (14.32)	
I make specific efforts to buy products made out of recycled material	0.72 (16.80)	
<i>Micro proconsumption</i>		
It appears like the more expensive something is, the more I want it	0.64 (19.43)	
When I buy nice things, it usually makes them feel good about myself	0.63 (19.17)	
Some people are spenders and some people are savers, I am a spender	0.82 (26.43)	
I enjoy spending more than saving	0.77 (24.40)	
<i>Macro anticonsumption</i>		
If we all consume less, the world will be a better place	0.69 (20.61)	
We should be more interested in saving the earth than growing the economy	0.69 (20.52)	
It would benefit future generation if people today would quit consuming so much	0.85 (25.89)	
<i>Macro proconsumption</i>		
Consumer spending helps us all by keeping the economy growing.	0.79 (23.92)	
A growing economy is good for all of us.	0.76 (22.89)	
The economy suffers when people stop spending their money.	0.66 (19.65)	
<i>Affect-balance</i>		
During the past few weeks ...		Bradburn (1969)
I felt particularly excited or interested in something (Positive)	0.77 (25.97)	
I was proud because someone complimented me on something that I had done (Positive)	0.87 (31.56)	
I was pleased about having accomplished something (Positive)	0.90 (32.89)	
I felt on top of the world (Positive)	0.67 (21.46)	
I felt lonely or remote from other people (Negative)	0.80 (26.53)	
I felt depressed or very unhappy (Negative)	0.90 (31.29)	
I was upset because someone criticized you (Negative)	0.69 (21.94)	
<i>Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS)</i>		
Indicate how you feel about life in general ...		Watson et al. (1988)
... happy (Positive)	0.91 (32.77)	
... hopeful (Positive)	0.80 (26.98)	
... positively surprised (Positive)	0.72 (23.64)	
... angry (Negative)	0.72 (23.63)	
... depressed (Negative)	0.78 (26.86)	
... guilty (Negative)	0.75 (25.43)	
... disappointed (Negative)	0.86 (30.76)	
... regretful (Negative)	0.77 (26.13)	
... dissatisfied (Negative)	0.80 (27.75)	
<i>Well-Being Index (WHO)</i>		
I have felt cheerful and in good spirits	0.92 (34.53)	WHO Website
I have felt calm and relaxed	0.88 (31.80)	
I have felt active and vigorous	0.80 (27.95)	

TABLE 1
Continued

Scale/Items*	Standardized Loading (<i>t</i> -values)	Source/ Adapted From
<i>Satisfaction with life</i>		
In most ways my life is close to my ideal	0.80 (27.59)	Diener et al. (1985)
The conditions of my life are excellent	0.85 (30.57)	
I am satisfied with my life	0.89 (32.71)	
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life	0.77 (26.23)	
<i>Life satisfaction</i>		
I am generally happy ...		Iris and Barrett (1972)
... with my standard of living and financial situation	0.67 (21.08)	
... with the relationship I have with people such as relatives	0.82 (27.87)	
... with my family situation	0.80 (26.66)	

one. We selected scales that focused on people's appraisal of their lives and not simply how they feel. One scale was the satisfaction with life scale developed by Diener et al. (1985). The other was the life satisfaction index developed by Iris and Barrett (1972).

Measures and Purification

Following a process recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), the measurement quality of the indicators was evaluated. They recommend that researchers first refine the measurement model before testing the structural component of the model. The goal is a final set of items with acceptable discriminant and convergent validity, internal consistency, reliability, and parsimony. Every factor in this study was submitted to a confirmatory factor analysis and all factor loadings were significant at the 0.01 level and all individual reliabilities were above the required value of 0.4 (Bagozzi and Baumgartner 1994). According to Bagozzi and Baumgartner (1994) and Bagozzi, Youjae, and Phillips (1991), a composite reliability of at least 0.7 is desirable. This requirement was met. After assessing the individual factors, the reduced set of items was subjected together to a confirmatory factor analysis using maximum likelihood estimation via LISREL 8.5. Table 2 reports construct inter-correlations as well as additional information on the reliability and validity of these measures. Although the chi-square value for the measurement model is significant ($\chi^2_{(647)} = 2692.40$, $p < 0.01$), other goodness-of-fit measures indicate a good overall fit of the model to the data: RMSEA = 0.06 (see Baumgartner and Homburg 1996), NNFI = 0.95, IFI/CFI = 0.96.

TABLE 2
Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Measure	MiAC	MiPC	MaAC	MaPC	PAN+	PAN-	AB+	AB-	WHO	LSI	SWL
Micro anticonsumption (MiAC)	0.76										
Micro proconsumption (MiPC)	-.22**	0.81									
Macro anticonsumption (MaAC)	.31**	-.05	0.79								
Macro proconsumption (MaPC)	.14**	0.07	.12**	0.78							
PANAS-positive (PAN+)	.12**	0.03	0.05	.14**	0.85						
PANAS-negative (PAN-)	-.13**	.17**	0.01	-.12**	-.36**	0.90					
Affect balance-positive (AB+)	.19**	0.05	.09**	.20**	.46**	-.25**	0.88				
Affect balance-negative (AB-)	-.10**	.24**	0.01	-.12**	-.28**	.51**	-.20**	0.84			
WHO-5 (WHO)	.15**	-.02	.10**	.25**	.46**	-.33**	.47**	-.32**	0.91		
Life Satisfaction Index (LSI)	.19**	-.10**	0.02	.16**	.41**	-.39**	.37**	-.38**	.41**	0.81	
Satisfaction with life (SWL)	.20**	-.06	0.00	.15**	.49**	-.44**	.46**	-.35**	.47**	.67**	0.90
Mean	4.41	3.48	4.66	5.49	5.46	2.32	5.53	2.73	5.71	5.3	5.09
Standard Deviation	1.16	1.33	1.2	1.05	1.13	1.14	1.06	1.38	1.13	1.19	1.19
Variance Extracted	0.52	0.52	0.56	0.55	0.66	0.61	0.65	0.64	0.75	0.6	0.69

Note: Construct reliabilities are shown on the diagonal.
*** $p < .01$.

Construct Validity Assessment

Additional analyses were conducted to provide more confidence concerning the measurement properties of the scales. The next step was assessing the validity of the model. Each of the items exhibited acceptable loadings (path estimate > 0.50) and were significant (t -value > 2.0), thus indicating acceptable convergent validity. As evidence of discriminant validity, none of the confidence intervals of the phi matrix included 1.00 (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). In addition, the amount of variance extracted for each construct was compared with the squared phi estimates (Fornell and Larcker 1981) and the estimates for all constructs was greater than the squared phi estimate, further supporting sufficient discrimination between the variables. All factor loadings are significantly different from zero, as evidenced by their consistently large t -values. Finally, the reliability of the scales was assessed via the calculation of composite reliability scores. These scores ranged from 0.76 to 0.91, all of which are above the cutoff of 0.6 suggested by Bagozzi et al. (1991). Based on these results, the measures have sufficient validity and reliability and so allow testing the hypothesized model.

Structural Model Estimation

The research questions were explored within the framework of structural equation modeling through LISREL 8.5 (Joreskog and Sorbom 1993) using the items shown in Table 1. Our study tested for common method variance using the marker variable approach (e.g., Fang, Palmatier, and Evans 2008) and found no evidence that it was biasing the overall results. The results of the hypotheses test are shown in Table 3. The fit of the data to the proposed model is quite good: ($\chi^2_{(668)} = 2985.91, p < 0.01$; RMSEA = 0.06; IFI/CFI = 0.96; NNFI = 0.95) and all proposed paths are significant, thus supporting the model's structure and indicating that the answers to both research questions were "yes." There does appear to be strong support for a relationship between attitude toward consumption and both the affective and cognitive components of subjective well-being. It should be noted that the sign of the path coefficients were always positive for the relationships between micro consumption attitudes (both pro and anti) whereas they were always negative for the relationships between macro consumption attitudes (both pro and anti). The only exception to this is for the two negatively worded scales (negative affect balance and negative affect) where the signs of the path coefficients were reversed.

TABLE 3
Path Estimates and t-Values

Subjective Well-Being	Micro Anticonsumption	Micro Proconsumption	Macro Anticonsumption	Macro Proconsumption
Positive affect balance	1.90 (5.5)	0.98 (4.66)	-1.14 (-4.51)	-0.36 (-2.07)
Negative affect balance	-1.78 (-5.42)	-0.64 (-3.22)	1.21 (5.03)	0.42 (2.51)
Positive affect	2.46 (5.65)	1.27 (4.76)	-1.55 (-4.84)	-0.69 (-3.1)
Negative affect	-1.91 (-5.43)	-0.77 (-3.6)	1.30 (5.04)	0.52 (2.92)
WHO-5 well-being	2.04 (5.06)	1.01 (4.51)	-1.26 (-4.72)	-0.39 (-2.11)
Life satisfaction	2.60 (5.54)	1.19 (4.18)	-1.69 (-4.93)	-0.70 (-2.96)
Satisfaction with life	2.73 (5.66)	1.30 (4.39)	-1.79 (-5.04)	-0.76 (-3.11)

Note: All paths are significant (*t*-values are in parentheses).

DISCUSSION

The current study was undertaken to see if attitude toward consumption and not consumption itself was related to both the cognitive and affective components of subjective well-being. To do so, we looked at the people’s attitudes toward their personal consumption (which we called micro attitudes) and their attitudes toward society’s consumption in general (which we called macro attitudes). We built on the previous work that has been done on anticonsumption extending it to also include positive attitudes toward consumption (proconsumption). Using five different scales, we found a very consistent pattern in the relationship between consumption attitudes and subjective well-being.

For micro-consumption attitudes, in every case, there was a positive relationship between our respondents’ consumption attitudes and the extent to which they felt better about life. This indicated that, as people develop stronger attitudes toward their own personal consumption, they tend to score more positive on both their feelings toward life and their evaluations of their own life. That was true whether the attitudes they developed were in favor of consumption (proconsumption) or against consumption (anti-consumption). When it comes to personal consumption, being in favor of consumption or being against consumption both increases a person’s feeling of well-being and their evaluation of their life. It is worth noting that, in every case, anticonsumption attitudes produced stronger positive feelings and evaluations than did proconsumption attitudes. Thus, anticonsumption attitudes toward personal consumption appear to be more strongly related to consumer subjective well-being than are proconsumption attitudes.

For macro-consumption attitudes, we found the exact opposite relationships. In every case, there were negative relationships between our respondents' attitudes toward macro-consumption and their feelings about life and life evaluations. The more a person was concerned about society as a whole consuming too much or consuming too little, the more negatively they evaluated their lives and the more negatively they felt about their lives. Here macro anticonsumption attitudes had a stronger negative effect on subjective well-being than did macro proconsumption attitudes.

There are many possible ways to interpret these results but perhaps the most plausible comes from the research that has been done on self-determination and autonomy. Fischer and Boer (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of studies across 63 countries and 420,499 subjects and found that individualism and self-determination is a much better predictor of well-being than is wealth. In fact, they found that any positive effect wealth had on well-being disappeared when autonomy and freedom was entered into the model. People are much happier and evaluate their lives more positively when they have the freedom and control over their own lives. At the micro (personal) level, attitudes toward consumption could reflect one's feeling of control over their economic circumstances. That is indeed a major motivation which micro anticonsumers have indicated for simplifying their lives (Craig-Lees and Hill 2002). However, macro (societal) attitudes about consumption are about things that are largely out of the individual consumer's hands. A concern for the negative impact of excessive consumption (for the macro anticonsumer) or of under consumption (for the macro proconsumer) makes the person focus on problems which are likely perceived as being out of his or her control. Thus, whether it is micro anticonsumption or micro proconsumption, a person is holding an attitude about what he or she can personally control which could be manifested in a positive view of life and better feelings about life. In contrast, when one focuses on the macro effects of consumption, he or she is focusing on things beyond a single individual's control. This focus on a world that is too big for the person to substantially impact would likely lead to negative feelings and evaluations of life.

It is important to note here that we did not measure the feeling of autonomy or self-determination and so this is simply conjecture and other possible reasons for the results obtained could exist. For example, Emmons (1986) found that the achievement of goals contributes to a person's subjective assessment of their well-being. Engaging in micro consumption adjustment activities, whether they are increasing or decreasing consumption, could be perceived as achieving a goal. However, societal changes are slow and few personal victories are felt if one's desire is to either increase or

decrease society's overall levels of consumption. I can gain a victory by purchasing a car or riding a bicycle but it is likely I will not experience many personal victories if my goal is to grow the auto industry or create a world where people use their cars less.

Studies could be done which could test these and perhaps other reasons for the differing impact that macro vs. micro attitudes toward consumption have on subjective well-being. However, regardless of the reason for the effect, the current research does appear to provide a strong indication that personal attitudes toward consumption do impact a person's subjective well-being. Whether positive or negative, personal attitudes toward consumption increase subjective well-being. In contrast societal concerns about either too much or too little consumption negatively impact a consumer's subjective well-being.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHANGING MACRO CONSUMPTION

Does this mean that macro consumption attitudes and behaviors cannot be changed? We think not. Rather the results we obtained appear to support a position forwarded by others that the most effective way to influence individuals to reduce consumption or otherwise engage in more environmentally friendly consumption is to emphasize the personal rather than the societal benefits for doing so (Black 2010; Fowler and Close 2012; Sharp, Høj, and Wheeler 2010). If indeed societal concerns simply tend to make people feel worse, then they are likely to avoid such messages. However, if personal reasons for consumption reduction or redirection enhance a person's feelings of well-being and assessment of life, then they should be more welcome and better received. Societal appeals may still be useful in the fight for sustainable consumption. Note that macro and micro consumption attitudes are not exclusive of each other. In fact the correlations between the four types of consumption attitudes were surprisingly low (see Table 2). So multiple approaches that emphasize both the societal and personal benefits of responsible consumption can be employed (Peattie and Peattie 2009). It is likely, though, that the societal appeals will be substantially enhanced if a consumer is already convinced that such responsible consumption is in his or her own personal best interest.

These findings also appear to call into question the feasibility in democratic societies of substantially reducing consumption through strong government restrictions as some have proposed (e.g., Seaford 2014). If indeed people feel worse when thinking about societal-level consumption, then mandating reduced consumption for societal reasons may meet with strong

resistance. This does not preclude policies that are targeted toward the reduction in consumption. It simply means that it would likely be better to do so in ways where consumers feel as though it was their choice to reduce consumption (i.e., they willingly adopted the position of micro anticonsumption). Thus, developing incentives to consume less or creating consequences for hyperconsumption would likely be better received by consumers than would mandates which force them to consume less.

So for example, there are many costs of consumption which are not directly borne by consumers—the most notable of which is environmental degradation from product disposal. If these costs were somehow incorporated into the consumption experience itself, this might both provide the funds for more environmentally friendly means of disposal while at the same time creating anticonsumption behavior by consumers which is perceived by them as being in their own best interest. They might become happier micro anticonsumers by choice rather than disgruntled macro anti-consumers by force.

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